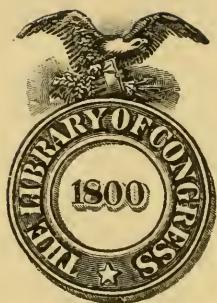


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BY

BASIL MACDONALD HASTINGS



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By

BASIL MACDONALD HASTINGS

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Dedicated to
JOHN E. VEDRENNE AND DENNIS EADIE
In gratitude for their sympathy
and encouragement.

(26)

PERSONS CONCERNED

LUKE SUFAN.

SETON SUFAN.

ELLEN SUFAN.

ROSE APPLEYARD.

RANDOLPH QUALTROUGH, of "*The Daily Passenger*."

WILLOUGHBY WOODS, of *The Woods Billposting Co.*

BERT PYM, of *Novelty Advertising Co.*

JOHN HEXT }
DUNCAN MUDIE } of *John Hext & Co.*

ELSIE MAKINS.

ADOLF.

TWO REPORTERS.

A MAIDSERVANT.

SCENES

ACT I. (Before the War).

The Music Room, 31a, Arlington Street.

ACT II. (During the War).

Luke Sufan's City Office.

ACT III. (After the War).

The Music Room, 31a, ~~Arlington~~ Street.

(Some years elapse).

ACT IV. On the Leads of a house in Hampstead.

CAST

This Play was first performed under the management of Messrs. Vedrenne and Eadie at the Kingsway Theatre, London, on April 15, 1915, with the following cast:—

LUKE SUFAN	<i>Mr. Sydney Valentine.</i>
SETON SUFAN	<i>Mr. Alan Fisher.</i>
ELLEN SUFAN	<i>Miss Lilian Braithwaite.</i>
ROSE APPLEYARD	<i>Miss Ellen O'Malley.</i>
RANDOLPH QUALTROUGH	<i>Mr. Athol Stewart.</i>
WILLOUGHBY WOODS	<i>Mr. Paul Arthur.</i>
BERT PYM	<i>Mr. Arthur Chesney.</i>
JOHN HEXT	<i>Mr. Charles Daly.</i>
DUNCAN MUDIE	<i>Mr. Campbell Gullan.</i>
ELSIE MAKINS	<i>Miss Violet Graham.</i>
ADOLF	<i>Mr. Leon M. Lion.</i>
TWO REPORTERS	<i>Mr. Harvey Braban and Mr. Stewart Dawson</i>
MAIDSERVANT	<i>Miss Janet Ross.</i>

The play was “produced” by Mr. Sydney Valentine.

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In the event of more than one performance being given, the Fee for the second representation is Four Guineas and for the third and further representations, Three Guineas. But this reduction only applies when the performances are CONSECUTIVE (evening following evening or evening following matinée) at the SAME THEATRE OR HALL.

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ACT I

BEFORE THE WAR

SCENE.—*The Music Room, 31a, Arlington Street.*
The room is very tastefully panelled some height from the floor, the wallpaper above being a deep wedgwood blue. The floor is of polished pine and has white and bronze blue rugs on it. The only door is in the back wall about c. Up left against the back wall is a grand piano. To the right of it is the piano stool and just below it is a low, backless seat. An oval table stands centre. Down extreme left stands a pedestal bearing a graceful statue of Pan playing his pipe. Right centre above fireplace there is a large settee. Down at extreme right is a palm and flower stand. The fireplace is in the right wall. Against the left wall stands a shelved music cabinet. There are chairs down left at right angles to the audience, one above the table, one slightly to the left and one slightly to the right of the table, one against left wall and one against the back wall to the right of the door. The few pictures are gay watercolour sketches.

(When the curtain rises, SETON SUFAN, wearing evening dress, is discovered seated on the couch R.C. The audience see his face in profile. He is reading the front page of "Town Topics." He is a tall, slim good-looking boy of exactly twenty-one years. He hears the handle of the door move and he hastily throws the paper behind the couch. MRS. SUFAN enters. She is a tall, wistfully beautiful woman of about forty years. She wears a charming evening

gown of a quiet colour and only slightly decolletée as she has been dining with imperfectly bred people.)

MRS. SUFAN. So here you are. Why didn't you stay in the dining-room?

SETON (*hoping that she won't see the pink paper*). Oh, I can't stick their stories.

MRS. SUFAN. Bit unhealthy for my twenty-one year old athlete, eh? Don't they tell naughty stories at Cambridge? (*She sits beside him on the couch.*)

SETON. Only the churchy mob. What are you going to do to-night? Where's Miss Appleyard? Couldn't I catch a late train back?

MRS. SUFAN. Seton! Want to leave your poor old mother already?

SETON. Oh, mother, don't be sentimental. I kissed you this morning, didn't I?

MRS. SUFAN (*smiling*). You did, Seton, and very nicely. What's the hurry to get back?

SETON. Well, really, mother, you must see it. This crowd are enough to give any chap the pip. (*He rises and goes up c.*)

MRS. SUFAN. I didn't expect you'd take to them, But you must remember, Seton, that they are your father's business friends. A man after money can't pick his acquaintances.

SETON. But why have them on my twenty-first birthday? I thought there would be only you and the pater and Miss Appleyard and perhaps a nice girl or two. (*He comes down to her.*)

MRS. SUFAN. You're a scamp, Seton. You haven't begun to think of girls?

SETON (*chuckling*). Rather, old ~~mother~~ ! Bags of' em.

MRS. SUFAN. No, really, Seton. (*A little anxious.*) Don't tell me you are bothering your head about that sort of thing.

SETON. Great Scott, mother, you don't mean that I oughtn't to kiss them.

MRS. SUFAN. Oh dear no. I wasn't thinking of girls exactly. I mean—creatures.

SETON. Mother, you are frightfully out of date. Chaps don't make asses of themselves that way now.

MRS. SUFAN. Oh, don't they ?

SETON. No fear. You either make love to a clinker in your own set and break her heart, or go off your rocker about a married woman.

MRS. SUFAN. Good heavens !

SETON. I haven't had a chance to do either yet, so you needn't worry. Where's Miss Appleyard ? (*Moving restlessly up stage again.*)

MRS. SUFAN. Do you want to kiss her ?

SETON (*turning round sharply*). What do you think she'd say ?

MRS. SUFAN. She might forgive you on your twenty-first birthday.

SETON. She was all over that journalist chap at dinner—what was his name ?

MRS. SUFAN. Randolph Qualtrough ?

SETON. He seemed a decent sort—the only one.

MRS. SUFAN. He is a gentleman.

SETON. How old is Miss Appleyard ?

MRS. SUFAN. She must be thirty. Why ?

SETON. She ought to get married.

MRS. SUFAN. Seton, for goodness' sake, don't say anything like that to her.

SETON. Why not ?

MRS. SUFAN. Well, my dear boy, Miss Appleyard —er—

SETON. Well ?

MRS. SUFAN. Well, she was once engaged to be married. The man died. She was rather poor, She then came to me as my companion. It must be eight or nine years ago, but I'm sure she has not forgotten.

SETON. I see. I might have made an awful ninny of myself.

MRS. SUFAN. You might. And besides, Seton,

you mustn't go about advising young women to get married. They mightn't like it. You're hardly old enough.

SETON (*mimicking her*). Not old enough. Was the old mother going to preach, eh ? (*He comes down close behind the couch and pretends to tickle her and snatch the ornaments from her hair.*)

MRS. SUFAN. Seton, stop that. You little devil ! Stop it, I say.

(*He stops teasing her and, with his right arm wound round her neck, kisses her very heartily. The door opens and admits MISS APPLEYARD. She is a woman of about thirty years, very gracefully built, very pretty, with a face as sweetly white as a sea-washed pebble. She is dressed in a plain black evening gown with only a suggestion of décolleté.*)

SETON (*going straight up to her at the door*). Miss Appleyard, will you marry me ?

MISS APPLEYARD. Yes. Quick. Come along, get your hat.

SETON. Oh, I thought you'd refuse.

MISS APPLEYARD. Now I'll sue you for breach of promise.

MRS. SUFAN (*rising and crossing to the piano, where she sits on the piano stool*). Seton had quite made up his mind that you were going to elope with Mr. Qualtrough. (*She begins to play a romantic air.*)

MISS APPLEYARD. Little boy's growing up, eh ? Little boy's eyes getting bigger.

SETON. He never took his eyes off you the whole meal.

MISS APPLEYARD. Do you know why ? . . . He's a cannibal, or descended from cannibals. He said that if he suddenly attempted to eat me I was to remember that he had warned me.

SETON. That sounds pretty fervent. Still, sweets are frightfully indigestible. Doesn't he know that ?

(*He slips his arm round her waist and kisses her as she comes down to the couch.*)

MISS APPLEYARD. You kissed me once before. Do you remember, Mrs. Sufan? It was on the first day I came here and his mouth was all sticky with toffee.

SETON. That's right. Rot me because I was once a kid. I only kiss you now because you're the only girl on hand.

MISS APPLEYARD. I'm perfectly well aware of that.
(*She sits on the couch.*)

SETON (*moving restlessly about*). Look here, what are we going to do?

MRS. SUFAN (*speaking as she plays*). We are going to be perfectly polite people, Seton, and sit and listen to your father and his guests.

SETON. Listen to them jawing about hoardings and unsolicited testimonials and best results and all that rot. Not for me.

MRS. SUFAN. Seton, this is your birthday party. You must put up with a little inconvenience.

MISS APPLEYARD. You must be a good boy, speak only when you're spoken to and be content with kissing old maids.

SETON. It's sickening. (*To Miss APPLEYARD.*) Can't you and I go to the billiard room?

MISS APPLEYARD. It's more than my reputation's worth.

MRS. SUFAN. Sit down and hold her hand, Seton, while I play to you.

(*SETON sits close to MISS APPLEYARD on the couch and leans his head on the back. MISS APPLEYARD strokes his curly hair.*)

SETON (*when after a few seconds the music stops*). This is all right. Go on, mother.

(*MRS. SUFAN laughs and resumes playing.*)
What is that tune, mother?

MRS. SUFAN. Something your father used to play.

(*The door opens and admits ADOLF, the butler. He is a dark, eely, sinister German-Swiss, fifty-seven years of age, though looking younger. His black hair is very scanty and streaky. He is obviously of Semitic origin. He carries a tray on which is a large leather casket smelling of a jeweller's shop. Smilingly he places the casket on the table.*)

MRS. SUFAN. What is it, Adolf?

ADOLF (*who speaks with a suspicion of a foreign accent*). I can't say, madam. The master told me to place it in this precise position.

(*He smilingly retires.*)

SETON (*going to table and examining case*). What a nasty, greasy smile that beggar's got. Why doesn't dad get rid of him?

MRS. SUFAN. Get rid of Adolf! I wish he could, but you might just as well ask him to cut off his right hand.

SETON. Nasty foreign brute!

MRS. SUFAN. They were friends thirty years ago. Adolf is now your father's butler. They are still friends, though I'm sure the old wretch would sooner murder me than serve me.

SETON. Dad's tastes are really the limit. I say (*in reference to the case he handles*), it's a jeweller's box, isn't it?

MRS. SUFAN. Don't say you've bought your poor old mother a tiara, Seton.

SETON. I don't know anything about it.

MISS APPLEYARD. Who has a birthday?

SETON. Oh Lord! Not another present!

MISS APPLEYARD. Poor martyr!

SETON. But you've all given me one, even the servants. Whom can it be from?

MRS. SUFAN. How if it were a present from your father's guests to-night?

SETON. Oh, my hat !

MRS. SUFAN (*who is still playing softly*). The gentlemen who you said " gave you the pip."

MISS APPLEYARD. And to whom you were so very, very haughty during dinner.

SETON. Can it really be from them ? I shall feel a mean swab. What on earth can it be, anyway ?

(*The door opens and SETON drops the case as if it were a hot coal, hurriedly resuming his seat by MISS APPLEYARD. RANDOLPH QUALTROUGH enters, carrying a book. A man of about 32 years of age. he stands, over six feet and has a striking rather than a handsome appearance in evening dress. He speaks very softly, as is the way with giants. He leaves the door open behind him and comes smilingly down to MISS APPLEYARD. He places one hand on the edge of the couch and leans over her.*)

QUALTROUGH. You were quite right. It goes " Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know." (*He shows her the lines in the volume of Keats which he carries.*)

MRS. SUFAN (*still playing*). Seton !

SETON (*rising reluctantly*). Yes, mother ?

MRS. SUFAN. Come and turn over this page for me.

(*SETON crosses to her and QUALTROUGH takes his place on the couch.*)

MISS APPLEYARD. I thought I was right. And I love to catch anyone out in a quotation. It makes me feel so clear-headed.

(*SETON has turned and is about to go again to the couch when he sees that QUALTRUOOGH has taken his place. He stops still, speechless with disgust, glares at QUALTROUGH and then turns to his mother. MRS. SUFAN smiles mischievously, and he seats himself impulsively on the little seat below the piano, crosses his legs and thrusts his hands in his trouser pockets.*

WILLOUGHBY WOODS and DUNCAN MUDIE; both in evening dress, enter. WOODS is a tall, clean-shaven, slightly ruddy, middle-aged man. He is an American, and this is obvious from his way of speaking. He is a very keen man of business, but there is decidedly a whiff of the open air about him. DUNCAN MUDIE is a short, broad, good-looking Scot of about 35. He wears a dark moustache, his complexion is very clear and his eyes bright. He alone, of SUFAN's guests, is not altogether happy in his environment, but he is always bright and smiling. He would feel easier if some one asked him to sing, though, oddly enough, he has no voice. WOODS enters first and walks down easily to MISS APPLEYARD. MUDIE looks brightly round and then moves to the left, leaning against the hollow of the grand piano.)

WOODS. I hope you properly felt the agony of separation from us, Miss Appleyard.

MISS APPLEYARD. I did, Mr. Woods. I would have thrown myself off the balcony into Arlington Street if you had been a minute longer.

QUALTROUGH (*with lazy interest*). Has there ever been a suicide of that sort in this street? When I was a junior reporter, I used positively to live on suicides. If anyone jumped off a balcony on Monday it always meant five shillings extra for me on Saturday. I don't know that I ever earned anything out of Arlington Street.

(*While Qualtrough is speaking Bert Pym enters.*
He is very short and plump, like a robin. He is neatly and smartly dressed, though the buttons of his dress waistcoat are not quite what they should be. He has a well-trimmed little moustache and his eyes are bright. Immediately he enters the audience recognize a humorist. Thus now he makes a bow and then repeats it to all in the room as if he were giving an imitation of an actor called before the curtain. Now he improvises an imitation of a

juggler throwing up balls and catching them behind his back and finishes quite a miniature entertainment by producing a coin, affecting to swallow it and then recovering it from his sleeve. Again he bows all round amid genuine amusement. A great boy, BERT PYM. The soul of humour. Thus sometimes one might see him amusing the company by affecting to be lame, dragging one leg after the other. Anon he may execute a step dance or convulse one by patting his hat after the manner of a celebrated music hall comedian.)

PYM. Missed my vocation, didn't I, Miss Appleyard?

SETON. I wish you'd show me how you do that coin trick, Mr. Pym.

PYM. Perfectly simpl^e, dear boy. (*He comes to him and repeats the trick.*)

MISS APPLEYARD (quietly to QUALTROUGH). Quaint little chap, isn't he?

QUALTRÖUGH. He's worse than quaint. He's entertaining. I have an awful presentiment that before the evening is out he will scratch himself with the object of representing a monkey. You know the sort of thing.

MISS APPLEYARD. Oh, very well. I've been expecting him all the evening to give an imitation of Sir Herbert Tree.

(JOHN HEXT enters, followed by LUKE SUFAN. HEXT is a tall old man, slightly stooping, with round shoulders. His hair is scanty and his moustache white. He is inclined to mumble when he talks. LUKE SUFAN is a big, burly, handsome man of fifty. He wears a short beard and moustache. ("Thou shalt not destroy the corners of thy beard."—Lev. xix. 27. Jews clip the hair of the head with scissors. A razor is not employed, and shaving is avoided.) A slight prominence of nose and a violent ruddiness of lip indicates his Jewish extraction.

He looks exceedingly well in evening dress, though one deplores the searchlight diamonds in his shirt front and on his left hand. He is just now in excellent spirits, though they are clearly, to a keen observer, of the post-liqueur order.)

SUFAN (*as he enters with his hand on HEXT's shoulder*). Just what I say, bonny, just what I say. Life's the funniest thing in this world, absolutely.

(WOODS walks up to meet him. HEXT seats himself on chair left of table.)

Well (*to Woods*), bonny, any complaints? Why aren't you smoking? Adolf——

(ADOLF has followed his master into the room and closed the door after him.)

Bring the cigars. You know the ones. (*To Woods again after ADOLF's exit.*) I must tell you. Old Johnny Hext——

HEXT. Not so much of the "old," Sufan.

(BERT PYM drops down into the easy chair down left.)

SUFAN (*laughing*). Young Johnny Hext has been trying to tell me a story all the evening. He says you wouldn't let him get in a word edgeways. Well, he stopped behind just now to give it to me, and bothered if it isn't the best I've heard for years.

HEXT. Humbug. Little peculiar, that's all, Miss Appleyard. Loss of memory.

SUFAN. Well, this is it. Old Johnny——

HEXT (*with emphasis*). Not—so—very—old.

SUFAN. He's afraid of his wife. That's the first point.

HEXT. I said nothing of the sort. What I——

SUFAN. Now, you keep quiet. Johnny was very late the other night, one o'clock or some dreadful time. Not wishing to disturb his wife's slumbers —ahem—he took his boots off in the hall——

HEXT. An absolute fabrication, Miss Appleyard.
SUFAN.—and—when he reached the bedroom, undressed very quietly indeed. His wife didn't stir, and he sneaked into bed finally without waking her up. It was the first time such a thing had ever happened, and old Johnny was all the more surprised because he had dropped one of his boots. He was so puzzled that he thought she must be shamming. So he turned round to tap her on the shoulder. Then he remembered that she'd gone away for a fortnight that morning.

(*He roars with laughter and the others join in, but not so noisily. Woods sits on right of table. Seton laughs shrilly a good deal later than the other men. Adolf re-enters with the cigars.*)

SETON. That's not bad. I must remember that.

MRS. SUFAN. What is the interesting casket on the table, Luke?

SUFAN. Eh? Ha, ha! You must ask our guests about that. Pass the cigars round, Adolf.

WOODS (*rising and speaking slowly but with a gathering assurance*). Well, Mrs. Sufan, with your husband's consent, we have been permitted to do—to show in some way our interest, I might say our friendship for him by remembering in some small way the twenty-first anniversary of the birth of his son.

SUFAN. That's it, my bonny boy. Wait a bit till they've all got something to smoke. (*He is anxious that the thing should be done with reasonable ceremony.*)

(*Woods, thus interrupted, does not know whether to sit down for a while or remain standing. Finally he sits down. All take cigars from Adolf, who places the box on the table before retiring.*)

Where's Mudie?

(He looks round and discovers that young man still leaning meekly against the piano.)

Get a chair, Mudie. Make yourself at home.

MUDIE (who does not relish attention being drawn to him). That's all right. I'll just sit here.

(He speaks in a soft Scottish accent. The seat he chooses is on a chair against the left wall, quite close to where he is standing.)

SUFAN. Oh, not there, bonny, not there. Come and sit where we can all see you.

PYM (imitating a Scottish accent very vilely). Come into the body of the kirk.

(MUDIE self-consciously brings his chair down and places it midway between those of WOODS and PYM.)

SUFAN. That's better, bonny, that's better.
(SUFAN sits above table C.)

MRS. SUFAN. Now, Mr. Woods, do put the poor boy out of his—er— Seton, you'll have to make a speech later.

WOODS. Well, Mrs. Sufan, it has not been our pleasure to meet you or your son before this evening, but I may say we all have been very closely associated with your husband since he started that great commercial proposition that is now so well known and—er—so—

PYM. And so forth!

WOODS. Well, Mr. Pym is justified in drawing attention to my halting eloquence. I'm sure he could give you a flow of oratory that would put Daniel Webster back in short pants.

(Laughter from PYM, who smacks his knees.)

This speech should have been made by my friend Arthur Logansport Hartman, whose name is everywhere respected in the advertising world, but unfortunately, though he is a subscriber to the tribute

on the table, he was unable to be present. He then asked me to make the presentation. I answered "no" with a capital N and he replied "Punk," so there was nothing else for it. He properly wrung in a cold deck on me as we say in America. Well, I can say I'm glad, real glad, to be here and be associated with this—er—with this tribute. I've known Luke Sufan a good many years now and all I can say is that I hope the son will grow up like his father. A twenty-first birthday is a landmark in one's life, a time for resolutions and a time for—er—consideration. It's well that the practice of gifts should mark it because that practice helps the receiver to realize the significance of the—er—

HEXT. That's enough, Woodsey.

WOODS. Well, maybe I'm getting too far into the deep stuff. But I do want to emphasize our pleasure in meeting Mrs. Sufan and her son. I see from *Who's Who* this morning that our host and hostess celebrate their silver wedding next year.

SUFAN. What's that?

WOODS. I say I see that you celebrate your silver wedding next year.

SUFAN. Yes, yes. But where did you say you saw it?

WOODS. I saw it from the date of your marriage in *Who's Who*.

SUFAN (*excitedly*). In *Who's Who*. Do you hear that? In *Who's Who*. Now that's a funny thing. I sent them all the details so that they shouldn't have the trouble of asking me, but I didn't know I was in. (*To QUALTROUGH*.) Just ring that bell behind you, bonny. We must have a look at this.

(*QUALTROUGH presses the bell-push by the side of the fireplace.*)

Who's Who, eh? We are getting on. How long was it, Woodsey? Have they—

MRS. SUFAN. My dear Luke, do let Mr. Woods finish his speech.

SUFAN. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. That's right. You go on, bonny, you go on.

WOODS. Well, I was remarking that next year you and your good wife would be celebrating your silver wedding. It may or may not be the privilege of all of us here to-night to be near enough to you on that occasion to personally congratulate you——

QUALTROUGH (*sotto voce*). —personally to congratulate——

WOODS. —but I may say right here and now that the fortunes of your family——

(ADOLF enters quietly and stands by the door.)

SUFAN. Ah, Adolf, I want you to send some one out at once to get a copy of *Who's Who*. You know the book, don't you ?

ADOLF. Yes, sir. Rather difficult to get it at this time of night, sir.

SUFAN. M'yes. But it's sure to be on sale at a railway bookstall. (*He feels in his pocket.*) Seven and sixpence, isn't it ?

HEXT. Fifteen shillings, young fellow.

SUFAN. Oh ! Fifteen shillings ! . . . I know. Mr. Trappes at Number 19 is sure to have one. Take him my compliments, Adolf, and ask him if he'll be good enough to lend me his *Who's Who* for an hour or so.

ADOLF. Yes, sir

(*Exit ADOLF.*)

SUFAN. Come on again, bonny. You're making this oration under difficulties.

MRS. SUFAN. You ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourself, Luke.

SUFAN. Woodsey doesn't mind, do you ?

WOODS. Don't you sympathize with me. Mrs. Sufan. I'm always sorry for those who have to

listen to me. Anyway it's all over now. I'll just ask Mr. Seton Sufan to accept this tribute from his father's friends and congratulate him on attaining his majority.

(*He opens the casket and produces a large silver loving cup, rendered a monstrosity by its gilded handles. A murmur of simulated admiration comes from MRS. SUFAN. SETON stares at it as if it frightened him. He rises and takes it awkwardly.*)

SETON. It's awfully good of you. Terrific sort of pot, isn't it, terrific? You are good. It's really swagger, isn't it? Thanks awfully, Mr. Woods. (*He shakes Woods' hand and then makes an impulsive dash behind SUFAN'S chair and shakes hands with HEXT.*) And you, Mr. Hext. (*He shakes HEXT'S hand.*) And you, Mr. Qualtrough.

QUALTROUGH. Well, Mr. Sufan, you must not include me. I was not given an opportunity of——

SUFAN. No, Seton, Qualtrough's not in this. But he's going to put it in the *Daily Passenger*.

QUALTROUGH (*sharply*). Eh?

SETON. Oh Lord! Oh, yes. Thanks awfully. (*Crosses to MUDIE.*) And thank you, Mr. Mudie. (*Shakes hands with him.*) And thank you, Mr. Pym. (*Shakes hands with PYM.*) It's an awfully fine thing, isn't it?

PYM (*with sincerity*). Laddie, it's a toff's lot. It's a really nice ornament. You can keep that all your life. It's good enough for any sideboard. In fact you could put it anywhere and never get tired of it. It's so tasteful.

SETON. Yes. It would create a sensation at Cambridge. Look, mother.

(*He passes the pot to his mother, who examines it with well affected interest.*)

I can't make a speech, father, you know. But it's very sporting of—er—these sportsmen to give me

this, and I thank them very much indeed. (*He again sits on the small seat below the piano.*)

SUFAN (*rising*). Well, of course, it's only natural that the lad should be bashful. I'm sure when I was his age I could have talked the hind leg off an elephant, but they knock that sort of thing out of them at Cambridge. Well, my bonny boys, it's a pleasure to have you here to-night. When I look back I can't help thinking life's the funniest thing in the world. It really is. When I was that boy's age I was trying to get a living out of an old fiddle, drawing "one-one" for a night's work when I could get it. "One-one." And very often not more than once a week. And did you notice that funny old chap who waited on us at dinner? Old Adolf? He's just gone for the *Who's Who*. Well, bless you, bonnies, he used to play my accompaniments. Yes, and now he's my butler. He was a Soho waiter then. Oh, I tell you, life's the funniest thing in this world. Then suddenly I strike the good old Staminal. It came to me one night in a chemist's when I was buying twopennworth of toothache tincture after playing a mazurka, a polonaise and two encores at an Aldersgate Street banquet. I saw the words Seigel's Syrup on a card. Seigel's Syrup, says I. Why not Sufan's Syrup? What for, I thought? Sufan's for Stamina wasn't a bad line.

HEXT. That's all right. Sufan's for stamina.

SUFAN. Stamina! Stamina! Stamina! I thought the word out for three days and three nights, and then it came to me. Sufan's Staminal Syrup. I got the chemist to mix me a buck-up paste and sold hundreds of bottles out of an eighteen penny "ad." in an evening paper. And now all the world knows it. "You need suffer no more" "Cures that rundown feeling," "Begin to get right to-day." Thousands of inches of space, a house in Arlington Street, two automobiles and a boy at Cambrige. My bonny boys——

MRS. SUFAN (*angrily*). What has all this to do with Seton's birthday?

SUFAN. You must let me talk. I'm coming to something. But not your way round. Now, bonnies, did I do this thing all out on my own? No. I got so far, but I could get no farther. Why? I hadn't the brains, to get beyond a certain point, but I had the capital. What did I do? I bought the brains, your brains. And in a few years Sufan's Staminal Syrup was the premier proprietary speciality in the patent medicine market. And you did it.

(*A murmur of polite dissent from the well-pleased advertising magnates.*)

Oh yes, you did. Mind you, I paid. There's not a single firm in London at this minute spending more on advertising. Is that right?

(*General assent. SETON pricks up his ears and begins to look suspicious. MRS. SUFAN watches her son closely.*)

I spend the money, but you give me value, and so long as I spend I reckon you'll keep my stuff up as the best seller.

WOODS. You can bet your life on that, Sufan.

SUFAN. Well, I've had you boys often enough in my house, but I've never before had an opportunity of telling you before my family how grateful I am to you. My wife interrupted me just now because she couldn't see the drift of my talk. Well, here's the drift. To-day my only son is twenty-one. He's a good lad. He's a straight lad. (*He drops into Yiddish.*) (He's my dearest possession, the apple of my eye, and the hope of my years.) Er iz mein tayerst fermegen, dos apple fin mein oyg, un die hofnung fin meine johren, if you'll forgive me using the old tongue. But he's started life with a big handicap. He's started as a rich man's son, and

the son of a rich man who is weak and fond enough to educate him right above his father's grade. Let that go. The thing is done and I've no regrets. But to-night—on this most important day of his life—I have reminded him of what his father is, of what his father sprung from.

SETON. Dad, I've never—

SUFAN. Don't say anything, Seton. I don't misunderstand you. But I don't want you to misunderstand what has occurred to-night. I designed that you should spend this evening of the day of your coming of age among the men of your father's set. You will go back to Cambridge and afterwards into the army, and you will always keep that cup that stands beside you. You will keep it (*he speaks slowly and meaningly to SETON, intending to convey anything but what he is actually saying*) as a souvenir of the affection and good wishes of the men who made the family fortune.

(SETON winces. *He does not understand. His father sits down quietly. There are a few spasmodic and not quite comfortable "Hear, hear's."*)

PYM (*brightly*). The oratory now being over, do we—? (*He deals cards in dumb show.*)

WOODS. I thought the proposition was that we should play snooker. Miss Appleyard—

MISS APPLEYARD. Oh, please don't bother about me.

QUALTROUGH. But you said that you would like to play.

MISS APPLEYARD. Yes. But—

MRS. SUFAN. Do play, my dear, if you want to.

MISS APPLEYARD. Oh, thank you so much, Mrs. Sufan. Come on, Mr. Hext. Only a penny a ball.

(*She links her arm in HEXT'S and they gaily leave the room.*)

(MUDIE carefully replaces his chair against the wall and follows them off.)

PYM (rising). Well, snooker let it be. (To SETON.) Will you play?

SETON. Not to-night, thank you.

PYM. Want to enjoy some music, eh? And very nice too. All my family are fearfully musical. Not me. Nanty! Here! Ever heard my composition? Little tone-poem. Excuse me, Mrs. Sufan. (He leans over the piano.) I call it "Nelson's Column." (He runs a finger the full length of the keys from base to treble.) That's the column. (He strikes A, the highest note of all.) That's Nelson. See? The whole idea is two movements. No time wasted.

(MISS APPLEYARD reappears at the door.)

MISS APPLEYARD. Oh, do come along. It will be so jolly with a lot playing.

PYM. Ah, she summons me!

(MISS APPLEYARD laughs and disappears.)

(WOODS and QUALTROUGH rise, but SUFAN remains seated.)

Beauty calls. (He strides dramatically to the door, gesticulating as he speaks.) Farewell, a long farewell to all my greatness. 'Tis a far, far better—

WOODS. Ah, cut it out.

(WOODS playfully jostles him from the room, following himself.)

SUFAN (rising and coming down to QUALTROUGH).

You'll get that little paragraph in, won't you, Qualtrough. (He jingles loose silver in his trousers pocket.)

QUALTROUGH. I'll try, Mr. Sufan. But you mustn't forget that—

SUFAN. Listen, bonny. I spend big money with your paper. I take a full page once a month,

and I've got space in every blessed issue. You put it the right way to your man. Write it nice and newsy. You know the sort of thing. "Merchant Prince's Son comes of Age. Handsome tribute from well-known city men." You know. Not too much. Just a name or two. Mr. Sufan, so well known in connection with the famous Staminal Syrup and all that. Hang it. I'm in *Who's Who*. I ought to be good enough for the *Daily Passenger*. Have a cigar? (*He picks up the box from the table.*)

QUALTROUGH. Thanks. I haven't finished this one.

SUFAN. Never min'l. Help yourself. Put some in your pocket. They're all right. Go on.

(*QUALTROUGH reluctantly takes another and moves towards the door.*)

One be damned! Take a handful. Come on, bonny. They're all right, I tell you.

(*Despairingly QUALTROUGH takes a few more.*)

It doesn't matter about to-morrow morning. The next day'll do so long as it gets a good place.

(*They are walking off together.*)

You put it to your man. It's sure to be all right. And don't forget to say the boy's at Cambridge. (*He turns for a moment.*) Jesus, ain't it, Seton? Yes. He won the two hundred yards in ten seconds. There was a picture in the—

(*They are off.*)

SETON. It's horrible, horrible, horrible. (*He moves across the room and sits on the couch, leaning forward, his head in his hands.*)

MRS. SUFAN (*coldly as if with an effort to restrain herself*). Shall we play piquet?

SETON (*ignoring the question*). The damned hum-dugs! (*He gets up and strides up stage and down*

again.) My canonized aunt. Just look at it! I ask you.

MRS. SUFAN. Given to you for a purpose, Seton.

SETON. Yes. "As a souvenir of the good wishes and affection of the men who—" Pah! I feel as if I'd swallowed salt.

MRS. SETON. That was not what he meant.

SETON. Then why didn't he say what he meant?

MRS. SUFAN. He couldn't without offending his guests.

SETON. Then what did he mean?

MRS. SUFAN. He meant that he would like you to keep the cup to remind you of (*she speaks with difficulty*) your breeding.

SETON. My breeding! Am I ever likely to forget it?

MRS. SUFAN. You might. . . . Boys do. . . . He has seen that. Oh! He is not a little wise.

SETON. Breeding! Do you know what they call me at Cambridge?

MRS. SUFAN. No.

SETON. And unfortunately I can't tell you. And if you get a nickname at Cambridge, it sticks. All my life I shall be "Old"—well, never mind.

MRS. SUFAN (*with a little touch of concern*). Do you mean that you are avoided, snubbed, looked down upon?

SETON. Oh, no. My double blue stopped that. But I get the name all right. I'm supposed to laugh at it.

MRS. SUFAN. Well, can't you?

SETON. I can't. I hate the whole vile business. I'm ashamed of it. . . . Yes, and I'm ashamed of him.

MRS. SUFAN. I'm afraid he knows that.

SETON. I can't help it. Mother, you must realize the insult of this wretched present. These vulgarians have been screwed—yes, screwed to buy that hideous thing. "Come and dine. My son's

twenty-first birthday." What else could they do?

MRS. SUFAN. Remember that they were probably glad of the opportunity.

SETON. Of course they were. It suited their book to the ground. A present to him would be too obvious. But one to his son—and on such a suitable occasion—just the thing. Just the thing! That's what they'd whisper over their lunches. Just the thing to please the old Yid—the old Yid, mother. That's how they'd speak of him.

MRS. SUFAN. I know, I know.

SETON. The dirty, hypocritical gang. For two pins I'd smash all their heads with their own beastly pot.

MRS. SUFAN. Seton, you have no sense of humour.

SETON. Sense of humour! Is it funny to be made a fool of? Father may laugh. They may laugh. Can I laugh too?

MRS. SUFAN. Try, Seton. When the Greeks sent the Trojans a wooden horse, I'm sure the Trojans laughed at first. That big wooden horse was just as funny as this pot. And there is nothing in the pot to harm you.

SETON. No, mother. But is it always to be like this? (*He is very excited.*) Am I never to get away from—

MRS. SUFAN. Gently, Seton. There's a dear boy. You are going into the army. You will be in a world of your choosing then. He is rich, so you will be rich. You must not complain.

SETON. I know that I oughtn't to, but this has been inside me for a long time and it had to come out.

MRS. SUFAN. Had to come out? What had to come out?

SETON. What I've been saying.

MRS. SUFAN. You've said nothing that I haven't heard you say before.

SETON. Eh? Haven't I said it?

MRS. SUFAN. No. What is it?

SETON. Surely I said it. You understood, didn't you?

MRS. SUFAN. I may have understood

SETON (*after a pause*). Oh, mother, why did you marry a Jew?

(*There must be no suspicion of contempt in the pronunciation of this word.*)

MRS. SUFAN. You shouldn't ask me, for you know that I can't answer. Twenty-two years ago I was—I hardly remember what I was other than eighteen years of age. He was handsome, strong of will, artistic and ambitious. He appealed to me. I never thought of my religion. He never thought of his. He is far more religious now than he was when I married him. When you were born he agreed that you should be brought up as a Christian. He didn't seem to care. But I think he cares now. And, do you know, Seton, that in those days, keen on business as he was, he had a soul for other things—beautiful things—and especially for music. He played the violin like an angel. That little thing I was playing just now was his favourite air. When you were a baby he played it to you. Now he never touches the instrument. He cares for nothing in the wide world but his business—and you.

SETON. I wish he hated me.

MRS. SUFAN (*miserably*). Oh, Seton ! Seton !

SETON. I can't help it. I'm thoroughly ashamed of the feeling. I know it's unnatural. But there must be an end to this humbug. I can't bear his society. I can't look him in the face. My eyes drop when I have to speak to him. It's because—because I don't like him.

MRS. SUFAN (*speaking wistfully and reminiscently*). He is quite unlike what I ever pictured he would be. The greed for money has changed his body as well as his soul.

SETON. There is nothing in him that is like me.

There is nothing in me that is like him. It's extraordinary. He stands for everything that I would rather avoid. I suppose he's a great commercial genius. I suppose he's an awfully good man. But mother, mother darling, I have something from you that makes me hate commercial geniuses and—awfully good people.

MRS. SUFAN (*with a suspicion of a smile*). Seton, Seton ! Is all the bad in you your mother's ?

SETON (*putting his arms round her*). Mother, everything in me is yours.

MRS. SUFAN. Your strength ! Those long clever legs that let you run away from all the others ?

SETON. Oh, hang my strength. You're as tall as I am anyway.

(*She stands up beside him.*)

Taller ! And you know that you like what I like and hate what I hate. You must be unhappy. I am away long enough now. Of course I want to be away.

MRS. SUFAN. Yes. You can't even bear him for my sake.

SETON. I could, but I'm selfish. Soon it will be worse for you. I shall get my commission and you'll see very little of me. Will you live on as you're living now ?

MRS. SUFAN. How can I say ? . . . And you must not ask me such a question, Seton.

SETON. You don't realize that I've grown up.

MRS. SUFAN. I don't, I don't.

SETON. You ought to be glad—glad that I am old enough now to see your side, to sympathize even if I can't help.

MRS. SUFAN. That's good hearing, dear. You're thinking less of yourself.

SETON. Oh, no, I'm not. My mind's made up. I have my plan all right.

MRS. SUFAN. What do you mean ?

'SETON. I've stood all I'm going to stand. I'm of age and I'm going to cut free.

MRS. SUFAN. What mad idea is that?

SETON. I will not pretend any longer to an affection that doesn't exist. I'm going to have an honest row and end it all.

MRS. SUFAN. End it all? Do you mean that you will—

SETON. He shall cut me off. He shall drive me out. And quite justly too.

MRS. SUFAN (*sternly*). Seton, are you deliberately going to break his heart?

SETON (*uneasily*). I can only spare him if I'm willing to play the humbug for the rest of my life.

MRS. SUFAN. It would be braver to play the humbug.

SETON. As you do.

MRS. SUFAN (*hiding her tears*). That is brutal.

SETON. But it is true. . . . Oh, if you only would break too.

MRS. SUFAN. I shall not. He does not deserve it. There is something in his nature that you know nothing of, a sort of fanaticism for purity that uplifts him, that makes me afraid and respectful when I would despise him. You will be very little in his hands. He will pour into your ears what will burn in them every day of your life, Seton. Let him be.

SETON. I break. I don't go on. You shan't shake me.

MRS. SUFAN. I shall. I will not have him hurt that way. It would not be just.

SETON (*breathlessly*). Mother, I believe you love him still.

MRS. SUFAN. I say I will not have his heart broken. I love you, Seton, above everything in the world, but you shall not do this unjust thing.

SETON. Just or unjust, I'll do it. You can stick it if you like, but I shall be free.

MRS. SUFAN. Seton, I'll tie your hands and gag

your mouth. For God's sake, drop the notion.

SETON. Never!

MRS. SUFAN. Listen! Listen! . . . Here's your gag. (*She covers her face with her hands.*)

SETON. What is it?

MRS. SUFAN. Oh, I never meant to tell you.

SETON. Tell me.

MRS. SUFAN. You have forced me. Remember, you have forced me.

SETON. I'll remember. Tell me.

MRS. SUFAN. I'll tell you something of yourself that he does not know.

SETON. Something he does not know? Mother!

MRS. SUFAN. Listen. . . .

(*She hesitates, then she throws her arms round him. She feels that it is just possible that he will not let her embrace him again, when he knows the truth. Reluctantly she releases him.*)

You are not his son.

SETON (after a pause). What do you mean?

MRS. SUFAN. You are not his son. (*She looks up at him.*) Oh, don't look at me like that—don't look at me like that. (*She covers her eyes with her hands.*)

SETON (taking her wrists and pulling away her hands). I had guessed. . . . But, because you are—you, I would not believe.

MRS. SUFAN. It is true. (*She moves from him and sits in the chair above the table.*)

SETON. Who was he?

MRS. SUFAN. You had better not know.

SETON. Yes, I knew and yet I did not allow myself to know. Of course. This was the solution. Thank God you have told me.

MRS. SUFAN. Seton, Seton, aren't you thinking of me?

SETON. No. Of myself. Do you wish to tell me how it happened?

MRS. SUFAN. You must listen. . . .

(SETON sits in chair L. of table.)

For a little while we were very very happy. Then I think he tired a little, tired of me, tired even of his music. That wretched Adolf was his evil genius, I'm certain. He loathed me because I wasn't a Jewess. To him the marriage was awful. He lured my husband to fling himself into the business of money-making and the man seemed to slip from my knowledge. He became harsh and rude . . . then brutal. Later (*she shudders at the recollection*) he became very brutal. I ran away half mad with fear. I had no money. But I felt I must hide, and hide where I would be protected. I had no relations and I went to the house of the man I ought to have married. He sheltered me—and though he was a widower with children, offered to take me to the other side of the world and make me happy. I agreed—because the very thought of my husband filled me with terror.

SETON. But you came back to him.

MRS. SUFAN. Yes. After two months I came back. I lied as to where I had hidden and he was unsuspecting. Men of his race are like that.

SETON. But why, why did you come back?

MRS. SUFAN. The man who is your father was an officer and a few days before we had planned to go abroad he was unexpectedly offered an appointment that had been the ambition of his life. He had to sacrifice that or me.

SETON. And he sacrificed you!

MRS. SUFAN. I would not allow anything else. He would have given it all up for me (*a little proudly*), but I refused to spoil his life. And then—at that time—(*she hides her face*)—there was—you and your future to think of.

SETON. And what sort of hell did you come back to?

MRS. SUFAN. He graciously forgave me for run-

ning away and when he heard—when I told him—when I pretended to him that he was to become a father, he was kind. For two or three years, but that is all you need know, Seton.

SETON (*determinedly*). Mother, tell me how he treats you now.

MRS. SUFAN (*wearily shaking her head*). That is all you need know, dear.

(LUKE SUFAN'S voice heard off. SETON rises and crosses to the fireplace. SUFAN enters joyously, carrying the borrowed "Who's Who.")

SUFAN. Here you are, bonnies. Here you are, my boy. Just take this right in. (*He reads.*) "Sufan, Luke, b. 1863, Proprietor of Sufan's Staminal Syrup, S. of Isaiah Sufan; M. 1891, Ellen Alice Arkington; one s." Ha, ha ! "One s." One son ! That's, you, my boy. Ha ! ha ! That's damned funny. You know, I always say life's the funniest thing in this world. "One S." That's all you get. That's the way they snub you for being the son of a celebrity. I must go and show it to the boys. "One s." Ha ! ha ! ha !

(*Exit.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II

DURING THE WAR

SCENE.—LUKE SUFAN'S *City Office*.

Several months have elapsed since Act I. It is a bright January morning.

The room is very bare. The walls are distempered green and there are no pictures on them. A huge window occupies the best part of the right wall. In the centre is a long table, the longer sides being parallel with the R. and L. walls. On the table is a typewriter, a hand telephone, blotter, ink and pens, and many papers, all at the head farthest from the footlights. Above the table is an easy chair and on either side are four other chairs. On the back wall and occupying most of the left half of it is a file of the original of the various posters issued to advertise SUFAN'S Speciality. The top one represents a Red Cross nurse waving aloft a large bottle labelled "SUFAN'S STAMINAL SYRUP." Up right is a large blackboard with in front of it a set of steps. On the blackboard is the following legend in chalk letters :

YOU DON'T DRINK
SUFAN'S STAMINAL SYRUP
OR YOU'D BE TOO BUSY
TO LOOK AT THIS.

(The only door is in the left wall up stage. To the left of the table and at the end farthest from the footlights sits ELSIE MAKINS, a very pretty typist. She has

several unsigned letters before her on the table. At present, chewing the end of a pencil, she is looking up at the blackboard. LUKE SUFAN sits on the opposite chair with his back to the typist. He wears a dark grey morning suit. He is also looking up at the blackboard. In his right hand he holds a duster. A moment or two after the rise of the curtain he gets up, mounts the steps and wipes off the board the top and last two lines, leaving only

SUFAN'S STAMINAL SYRUP

in the centre. He now picks up a piece of chalk and crosses through the S's in this line, so that they become symbols for dollars, thus :

SUFAN'S STAMINAL SYRUP.

Now under this line he writes :

WORTH A DOLLAR A NIP.

Again he mounts the steps and writes at the top of the board :

THE ONLY CURE FOR AN—

He stops, scratches his head and gets down. He crosses to the table and consults a dictionary. He notes how to spell Anæmia and then goes back and finishes the word on the blackboard. Again he sits down and surveys the handiwork. The telephone bell rings. ELSIE MAKINS answers it.)

MISS MAKINS. Yes. Who? . . . Oh! . . . (To MR. SUFAN) Mr. Qualtrough is here. He wants to come in and see you.

SUFAN (*without turning*). Ah! He's off to the front to-morrow. Send him up.

MISS MAKIN (*speaking through telephone*). Ask Mr. Qualtrough to come up at once, please.

(SUFAN gets up again and going to the board crosses out "nip" in the last line and substitutes "dose." Then he sits and again scrutinizes the proposed advertisement.)

SUFAN. What do you think of it, Miss Makins ?
MISS MAKINS. You don't say what it costs.

SUFAN. That's right. Where shall I put it ?
MISS MAKINS. It's for America, of course.

SUFAN. Yes. . . . What's your idea ?

MISS MAKINS. Rub out the last line.

(He does so.)

Now put this : " You pay a dime and drink a dollar."

(He writes it down as she says, has a good look at it, and then a good look at her. Then he picks up the telephone.)

SUFAN (speaking into it). Counting - house, please. . . . Yes. Mr. Sufan speaking. Add five pounds to Miss Makins' cheque this week.

MISS MAKINS. Oh, Mr. Sufan !

(RANDOLPH QUALTROUGH enters. He is in khaki and wears the uniform of a staff interpreter.)

SUFAN. Qualtrough, do you want a wife ?

QUALTROUGH. Well ! That's odd.

SUFAN. Let me present you to Miss Elsie Makins, a girl with the prettiest and the longest head in London.

QUALTROUGH. How do you do, Miss Makins ?

(He is not awkward at the introduction, but for the life of him he cannot do more than smile approvingly at the girl.)

SUFAN. But you shan't marry her. She's indispensable. Run away now for a little while, Miss Makins.

MISS MAKINS. But these letters, sir ?

SUFAN. Ah yes. (He picks them up and glances at one or two.) Bring them in presently. The top one won't do anyway.

MISS MAKINS. Yes, sir. . . . Oh, thank you so much, sir.

(*She gathers up her papers and leaves the room.*)

SUFAN (*sitting down in chair at head of table*). Well ?

QUALTROUGH. It's really very odd that you should ask me that question as soon as I come into the room. That is precisely what I have come about.

SUFAN. What question ? . . . (*To himself.*) You pay a dime and drink a dollar.

QUALTROUGH. Why, about my wanting a wife . . . I do want one.

SUFAN. You pay a—well, this isn't a girl shop, bonny.

QUALTROUGH. Look here, Sufan, I'm off to the front to-morrow. I don't like to go without—you see another chap might come along. I want to marry Miss Appleyard.

SUFAN. Well, marry her. My wife will be furious. She's in a temper already. Wants me to sack Adolf—just because he thieves a bit. Adolf—the friend of my youth ! Adolf—the human pianola ! Worst accompanist in London, but he was a very good waiter. Very good butler too. He may be a German-Swiss, but he's naturalized all right. Why sack him ? Women are fools. What do you think of that ? (*He points to the blackboard.*)

QUALTROUGH. It's very smart. Do you mind telling me where Miss Appleyard comes from ?

SUFAN. Oh, I see. Want to know the pedigree before you buy the—ahem ! Well, bonny, you're wise.

QUALTROUGH. I'm thirty.

SUFAN. That's when you start being unwise. It isn't till you're thirty that you begin to give money away. I just gave that girl five pounds. I was a mug. She finished off that "ad." for me. I needn't have paid her. I threw the money away. And I'm hard up. Do you hear that, Qualtrough ? By George, I am hard up. Five pounds. (*He snatches*

up the 'phone.) Counting-house. . . . Is that the counting-house? (He scratches his head.) Oh, nothing! (He puts down the receiver.) Yes, bonny, I'm hard up.

QUALTROUGH. Nonsense.

SUFAN. Here, Qualtrough. You have your opinion of me, I know. You rather like me, but you think I'm vulgar, don't you? Don't deny it. You'd be a damned fool if you didn't think it. And you're not that. I am vulgar. I don't mind being vulgar and I don't mind not being able to get rid of it, but to console me I want money and power. Before the war I gave £20,000 to the—well, never mind which party, but you can guess it's the party that will get me a knighthood quickest. I find that I couldn't really afford the money. I've been misled. My business is going, going like blazes. We've dropped every month for six months. Now this war has put the lid on with a vengeance. I spend just as much on advertising but still—oh, I don't know anything about Miss Appleyard.

QUALTROUGH. Not her parentage?

SUFAN. Yes, I do. She was engaged. Man died. Then she came to my wife. Oh, damned good family. Kentish yeoman stock. Anyway, what are you squeamish about?

QUALTROUGH. Squeamish! Good heavens, I'm not squeamish. Any brothers and sisters?

SUFAN. Why don't you ask my wife?

QUALTROUGH. She would tell Miss Appleyard I had been asking. Besides I called there this morning. She's away for the day, down at Wisbech on hospital work.

SUFAN. That's right. So she is. Up to her eyes in everything outside her own home. . . . By Jove, you young fellows go love-making in a queer way nowadays. When I was young I kissed the girl first and asked if there was consumption in the family afterwards. Ah, now I'm vulgar, eh?

QUALTROUGH. Oh no. I looked like that because you misunderstand. Frankly, I'm head over heels in love with Miss Appleyard, and I shall ask her to marry me anyway, but when you're storming a fortress, Sufan, you must know its weak points.

SUFAN. Pah ! What an old-fashioned fellow you are. . . . What are you afraid of ?

QUALTROUGH. That she'll refuse me.

SUFAN. Why ? You've got a salary, you look honest and your features are not absolutely repellent.

QUALTROUGH (*laughing*). It isn't that. . . . I want to know something of Miss Appleyard's ancestry. My parentage mightn't be good enough. I'm the son of a commercial traveller.

SUFAN. By George ! That's good. Shake hands. Do you know who my father was ? No ? Well, he was what they call a music-hall jeweller. He made a living by hanging round saloon bars selling second-hand rings to third-rate music-hall artists. That's why I had to give £20,000. If the old man had been a tradesman with a shop half of that would have been sufficient.

QUALTROUGH. I daresay. And if I were the son of a canon or a disreputable Honourable I shouldn't be bothering you with questions.

SUFAN. Scut. You write her down too proud. She'll jump at you, jump at you. The girls'll throw themselves at anything in khaki, and quite right too !

QUALTROUGH. Why didn't she marry long ago ?

SUFAN. Man died, I tell you. Faithful to his memory.

QUALTROUGH. Who was he ?

SUFAN. Um ? His name was Peg—or was it “the Peg” ? That was it. He was the eldest son and his mother called him “the Peg”—the peg to hang the title on, you know.

QUALTROUGH. I thought as much. Big family ?

SUFAN. Lord—somebody.

QUALTROUGH (*despairingly*). Yes. From that to—a bagman's son.

SUFAN. You miserable devil. Here, try a dose of the old Staminal. That's what you want. Pay a dime and drink a dollar. Pay a dime and drink a— Damn it, though, you're right about this breeding business. I'm a father. My son wouldn't care a tinker's curse if he never saw me again.

QUALTROUGH. How's he getting on?

SUFAN. He doesn't write to me. He only writes to his mother. She gives me the letters. Here they are. (*He pulls out a packet from a drawer in the table.*) He's somewhere in German South-West Africa. He's been in one or two scraps. When the war broke out I was glad he was stationed in South Africa. But it seems there's plenty of hard fighting over there. . . . Damn it. He might drop me a line. (*There is a break in the big man's voice.*)

QUALTROUGH (*after a painful pause*). Do you write?

SUFAN. Yes. I humble myself. I send him plenty of money. . . . By God, Qualtrough, if my business smashes my boy will be done.

QUALTROUGH. He's selfish. You shouldn't think so much of him.

SUFAN (*after some moments in which he gives the impression that he is thinking of his boy*). You pay a dime and drink a . . .

(*The telephone bell rings.*)

(*Speaking into telephone.*) Send them both up. I expect Pym and Hext as well. Send them straight up as soon as they come.

QUALTROUGH. Who is it?

SUFAN. Mudie and Woods. We're pow-wowning at twelve. First time you've been in this room, isn't it? It's what I call my Idea Factory. When you catch me in here you can guess that something's going

to happen. (*He glances at his watch.*) Well, I wish you luck, bonny.

QUALTROUGH. Do you mean to-night or out in France?

SUFAN. Everywhere, bonny. Don't look so miserable about it. She won't eat you.

QUALTROUGH. I've interviewed everybody in Europe from a crowned head to an opera dancer and always got what I wanted, but (*very, very gloomily*) that sort of luck doesn't last for ever.

SUFAN (*after groaning in sympathy*). Look here, bonny, get out quick. I've got my own troubles.

QUALTROUGH. Very well. (*He rises and ambles uneasily to the door.*) Eight hours to wait. Actually eight hours. And not a man in the length and breadth of London with an atom of sympathy in his composition.

(DUNCAN MUDIE and WILLOUGHBY WOODS enter.
WOODS wears morning coat and silk hat. MUDIE is in a short overcoat.)

WOODS. Ah, Qualtrough, and how are you?

QUALTROUGH. Well, I don't mind confessing that I'm not quite my own bright self.

MUDIE. You're in the right colour, anyway.

QUALTROUGH. Yes. Nothing serious. Staff interpreter. I ain't no thin drab hero. (*He is leaving the room.*)

SUFAN. Half a sec', bonny. Take these with you. (*He gives him a couple of bottles.*) The old Staminal. Don't forget the poster. Keep you dry in the trenches.

(QUALTROUGH takes the bottles and exit laughingly.)

MUDIE. Good-morning, Mr. Sufan.

SUFAN. Good-morning, boys. Qualtrough's in love. Don't expect him to be civil. Take a seat. Smoke if you want to. I'm going to give you hell. (*He sits at the head of the table.*)

WOODS (*moving across the room and stopping to*

survey the legend on the blackboard). Ho ! ho ! Have we earned that already ?

(MUDIE sits on SUFAN'S left.)

SUFAN. You have. Sure sellers you are. Give you the money, you do the rest. Oh, I guess advertising is worth the money.

WOODS. Sure thing it is. Did I ever tell you how I sold the Luck Stone? . . . It was a little chunk of red sandstone with a silver band round it. We had thousands of 'em made at ten cents and sold 'em for two dollars.

SUFAN (*sulkily*). How ?

WOODS. Advertisement, sir, advertisement. We guaranteed nothing. We told the public to buy the stone and watch out if they wouldn't strike rich in ten days. We promised nothing, but we begged to draw the world's attention to what Charles P. Sultz, of Rickville, Ohio, said, "Within three days of acquiring your lucky stone, rich uncle died and left me a fortune." We didn't promise this all round, mark you, but what happened to Charles P. Sultz might happen to anybody, and if folk didn't get the luck they could send the stone back inside the ten days and their two dollars would be refunded.

MUDIE. Well, ye got them back in bushels, I'm thinking.

WOODS. Right enough, sonny, but it's a queer thing that 999 out of every thousand kept the stone till the eleventh day.

(MUDIE laughs.)

SUFAN. H'm. There's human nature in that.

(Enter BERT PYM, followed by JOHN HEXT. HEXT wears a dark lounge suit and bowler. On his coat is a badge indicating that he belongs to a drilling corps. PYM wears a dark blue lounge suit with rather a short jacket. On his head is a silk hat which

stops there, though at varying angles, throughout the act.)

PYM. Ha, ha. The conspirators are assembled
How are you, dear boy? (*He shakes hands with SUFAN.*)

SUFAN. All wrong. Take a seat. Morning,
Johnny. Come along, Woods.

PYM (*moving below table*). I'll cheer you up. The
brightest little wheeze you ever heard of. And *dirt*
cheap. (*He sits on the right of the table in the chair
nearest the footlights.*)

(Woods sits on SUFAN's right.)

SUFAN. It will have to be, bonny. There's no
money. Absolutely moratoriumed.

(All four laugh disbelievingly.)

HEXT. Lost a sixpence, old man? I daresay we
might buy a lunch for you. (*He sits on the left of the
table below MUDIE.*)

PYM. Listen. Have you ever seen a child's set of
bricks? This sort of thing. (*He pulls out a toy
model brick, gaily coloured.*) They manufactured one
and a half million sets a year of these in Germany
alone. Now we're collaring the trade. Taking it up
properly too. And, dear boy, I have an option with
the three leading firms on the job.

SUFAN. Do you want me to start a toy shop?

PYM. Wait a bit, dear boy. You know how they
get these things up. Look at that one. (*He throws
it down on the table to SUFAN.*) The idea is to teach
kids the alphabet. A for Apple, B for Banana, C
for Canary, and so on. Well, laddie, what would
you say to your little friend if he got you the option
on the letter S?

SUFAN. Well?

PYM. Instead of S for Strawberry or S for Sugar.
or S for Saucepan—supposing every kid in the world

was brought up from youth to know that S stood for Sufan's Staminal Syrup. How's that for teaching the young idea to shoot?

SUFAN. It's smart, bonny, very smart. But I can't pay. By George, I'm losing faith.

WOODS (*slowly and curiously*). Are you hounding or not, Sufan?

SUFAN. I am not. My business is going . . . I'm very much up against it.

HEXT. Just a bad patch, Luke. Not a fall on last equivalent.

SUFAN. A damned big drop on last equivalent. Last half year's trading showed no profit, all but a loss. We've dropped heavily every month for six months.

(PYM *whistles*.)

MUDIE. Is that what we've foregathered about this morning?

SUFAN. It is. Now, bonnies, I don't want to be misunderstood. You're my sellers. You cut up between you the largest sum spent on advertising by any individual firm in London—you, Woods, with the bill-posting, you, Bert, with the stunts, and you two lads with the press. You've done it well as far as I could judge, and you've been pals about it. But the scheme's suddenly stopped working. The Staminal won't sell. What have you got to say?

MUDIE. Well, it's very extraord—

SUFAN. Let Johnny speak first.

HEXT. Perhaps, Luke, the war—

SUFAN. This began before the war.

HEXT. Well, Luke, it's not a thing to jump to conclusions about. I've told you, of course, long ago that you ought to spend more on the papers than on the hoardings and stunts.

PYM (*cutting in sharply*). You've seen that so often in the papers that you believe it. The stunt's the thing. Get people talking and laughing about it. Now if I—

MUDIE (*interrupting*). Och awa', Bert, the press is the best for a patent medicine, especially the religious press.

WOODS. The rates are too high in anything with a circulation to show a—

HEXT (*also interrupting*). You keep your eye on the other things of our sort that sell. Plenty of space and plenty of dignity—that's what does it over here. I don't say (*pointing to the blackboard*) that sort of thing isn't all right for America. But here you want just a simple statement of fact.

PYM (*sneering*). Yes. "Sufan's Is It" or "Sufan's is Some Medicine." It's no good. There's too many of 'em at it. You must get a new notion.

MUDIE. I've spent the best part of three weeks getting testimonials from well-known men who are acting as special constables. I've got some of the very best. Is it all going to be wasted?

WOODS. Ah, the public's sick of the dodge. Footballers and cricketers and boxers, celebrities of any sort—the public doesn't associate itself with them. You get the name of the stuff drowned in the story and the photo. Buy the same space and put three words only in it—Sufan's Staminal Syrup. That's enough. Get the name big. Shout at 'em. This isn't America, where they're looking out for you to be clever.

HEXT. Ah, you've got to say something, Woodsey. Let 'em know it's not a bath fluid, anyway.

WOODS. Don't believe it. It's necessary for some things such as books. I saw a bill at Charing Cross bookstall the other day. "New Novel by W. W. Jacobs. Very funny." Well, that's commonsense. But the less you tell 'em about a patent medicine the better. What are you laughing at? (*To MUDIE, who has been chuckling*.)

MUDIE. I suppose if they sold the Bible they'd advertise it as "very religious."

PYM. Don't you reckon you've had value, Sufan?

SUFAN. I had value. I'm not getting it now.
That's the point. Why is it?

HEXT. H'm. Why?

(*He knows very well and so do the others.*)

MUDIE. Imphm!

PYM. Ah! Why?

WOODS. I don't suppose any of us is guessing.

SUFAN (*angrily*). Now that won't do, Woodsey.
You said money enough would force the sale of the
worst thing.

WOODS. Who said it was the worst thing?

SUFAN. Oh, hell! I know what you're thinking.

HEXT. Well, Luke, I'll be honest. . . . Of
course, it isn't quite . . . is it?

SUFAN. No. Nor are half a dozen others.

MUDIE. Ah! The public don't think so.

SUFAN (*very sharply*). Ah? Look here. Damn
you all! Have you been taking my money under
false pretences? Have you known that this thing
would collapse?

HEXT. Luke, Luke! Steady, old man.

SUFAN. Well, you're all callous enough about it.
You don't seem struck off your feet much by the
smash. How does Mudie come to know that the
public believe in the rival goods? I'll swear you've
seen this coming. Why weren't you honest enough
to tell me?

WOODS. Now, Sufan, don't shout at us. We
built the business up. You know it. You've had a
big lump out of it. If it drops, it drops no sooner
than you expected.

SUFAN. What do you mean?

WOODS. What I say. You knew the precise
qualities of this wretched Syrup long before you
called us in. It would never sell on its merits.
You got us to bluff the public. We succeeded and
you picked up a parcel. Surely you didn't think it
was going to keep you all your life. Be square now.

You know as well as any one of us here that the advertising's not to blame. It's simply the fact that the public have found the blessed stuff out.

SUFAN. If it's that ! If it's that ! Oh, curse it, if it's that !

WOODS. Why ? You've squeezed the lemon dry. Chuck it away and start squeezing another.

SUFAN. Start again ! By George, you're pretty glib.

MUDIE. I've had terrible trouble with the special constables. They all wanted to be funny about it. Galbraith said it made his hair grow.

(WOODS, PYM and HEXT laughs. SUFAN turns his head slowly, and fixes his eye on MUDIE.)

PYM. I usually lock my samples up, but I left a bottle lying about once and my wife got it. We had awful trouble with her.

SUFAN. Is that Galbraith, the famous novelist ?

MUDIE. The very same.

SUFAN. Let me see his letter. I've never read his books, but he's a man who knows how to advertise himself all right.

(MUDIE produces it from an inner pocket and hands it over to SUFAN.)

WOODS. When you come to think of it, it has had a good run. I've handled things before made up by a real good chemist, and they've—

SUFAN. He's not joking. (*His eyes on the letter.*) I'm damned if he's joking. "Dear Mr. Mudie," he says, "I've drunk two bottles and I don't like it. It had no effect on me except to make my hair grow substantially. I've had to have a haircut for the first time for three years." He's not joking. Have you seen him ?

MUDIE. Yes. It's quite right. It did make his hair grow, but what's the good of that to us ?

SUFAN. What's—the—good—of—that—to—us ?

You thick-headed, short-sighted owl of a Scotchman !

MUDIE. But we're not selling a hair restorer.

SUFAN. Not selling it ! Not selling it ! Of course not. (*His voice rises to a roar.*) But we shall sell it.

(*The others prick up their ears at once.*)

WOODS. Hello ! Hello ! You've hit a scent. By Jove, you've hit a scent.

SUFAN. You say my Staminal is found out—that it don't cure that run-down feeling, that the public is as anaemic after, as it was before—then, by all the powers, I'll wrap it up in a new cover.

WOODS. Good boy ! Good boy ! That's the talk.

SUFAN. Think of all my tons of stock ! It'll be as easy as A.B.C. to re-colour it and make it a bit thicker. Sufan's Scalp Cream ! How does that sound ?

HEXT. Luke, you're a genius. Sufan's Scalp Cream !

PYM. Sufan's Scalp Cream ! Holy crikey, he's hit it.

SUFAN. Look here ! The stuff'll do.

(*He pulls out a bottle of the Staminal from the drawer in the table and whips the covers off.*)

It doesn't smell.

(*He sniffs it himself and jerks it under the noses of Woods and Mudie.*)

It ain't sticky.

(*He dips his fingers in and rubs some on his hair.*)

It's the softest snap I ever struck. Makes it glossy, doesn't it ? (*He drops his head for inspection.*)

MUDIE. Good Lord, man ! Galbraith didn't put it on his hair. He drank it.

SUFAN. So he did, bonny. So he did. We'll tell 'em to take it both ways. "Drink it up and rub it in." They'll use twice as much.

PYM (*clapping his hands*). Ha ! Ha ! This does me good ! Good old Sufie. You'll get back home with it. I swear you will.

WOODS. Get home ? He'll canter it. It's the dandiest idea. But you mustn't drop the Staminal all at once, sonny.

SUFAN. No fear. No fear. We'll let it go gradually. Let it drop while the war lasts, reduce the advertising and switch on to this.

WOODS. That's the game. That's the game. By Jove, you're hot in here. (*He rises and goes to the window c.*)

SUFAN. Get your brains busy, boys. We'll set 'em alight all right. Bless my soul, if life isn't the funniest thing in this world.

HEXT. Hurroo for the Scalp Cream ! Josh ! Won't we make some of the old firms sit up.

PYM. Thank goodness you've got plenty of hair, Sufie. Your picture'll have to go on the bottle.

SUFAN. So it shall, bonny, so it shall. (*He is in high glee.*) Bonnies, this makes me feel ten years younger.

(MUDIE and HEXT are whispering excitedly to each other.)

PYM. Good lad ! Put your hair straight. We ought all to lunch together on this.

SUFAN (*as quick as lightning*). I will, bonny, I will. It's very kind of you. You shall all take me down to the Café Royal.

(*He gets out a pocket comb and glass and puts his hair to rights. Woods throws up the window and the noise of passing traffic and newsboys' calls enters the room.*)

What are you boys (*speaking to HEXT and MUDIE*) plotting about ?

(PYM joins WOODS at the window.)

HEXT. We're trying to fix on the best time to start.

SUFAN. Right away, bonnies, right away. In a small way, first, while trade's bad and then——

HEXT. You wait a bit, Luke. Here's the scheme of space bookings for the old Staminal, most of which this new hair restorer will take over.

SUFAN. Quite so. Quite so.

HEXT. Well, I make May the best on what we've got, but we can spread a good bit more, of course, if you want it.

SUFAN. Quite so. Give me the paper. (*He takes it and scans it carefully.*)

WOODS (*still at window*). What's that on the bill? "Desperate Fighting in German South-West Africa."

PYM. Where? By Jove, yes.

SUFAN (*throwing the paper down*). Don't pay any attention to that. Get out a new scheme. I want it everywhere, here, America and the Colonies by the Spring. We'll have the blighters out of Belgium by then. It's unlucky to wait.

WOODS. I say, Sufan. Your boy is in German South-West Africa, isn't he?

SUFAN. Yes, bonny. (*Jokingly.*) Shall we give him an agency?

WOODS. Look at that bill.

(SUFAN goes to the window and looks out.)

SUFAN. What bill? "Probables and Selections from Plumpton?"

WOODS. No, no, the other.

SUFAN (*gasping*). "Desperate Fighting in German South-West Africa."

HEXT and MUDIE (*looking up*). What's that?

SUFAN (*with a dry throat*). My boy might be in it. Little beggar's sure to get a scratch or two if there are any going. (*He rings a bell.*) Rare little

chap for a shindy. He was always fighting at school.
I'd give—

(MISS MAKINS appears at the door.)

Send out for a paper, Miss Makins. Look sharp.

(WOODS shuts down the window.)

MISS MAKINS. Yes, sir.

(Exit MISS MAKINS.)

HEXT. I thought the rebels were finished with.

SUFAN. Not yet, bonny. And there are German troops out there. There's a lot about it in the boy's letters. (*He takes out the bundle of letters from the drawer.*) Listen to this one. (*He reads.*) "You'll be bucked to hear I'm in camp on active service. My address is—The Censorship forbids my saying anything else. We are in the enemy's country and have been in action, and may be engaged again at any time. We have had a few killed, but the enemy—"

(*At this moment RANDOLPH QUALTROUGH enters.*

His face is white and his movements jerky. He carries an evening paper.)

"—lost more. Routine work keeps me busy. Endless guards, pickets, patrols, inspections, exercises and occasional night marches through wild country ending in early morning attempts to surprise the enemy." (*He sees QUALTROUGH.*) Hello, bonny !

QUALTROUGH. Sufan—

SUFAN. Yes ?

(MISS MAKINS appears carrying a telegram. She looks very troubled and frightened. QUALTROUGH snatches the telegram from her and waves her from the room.)

QUALTROUGH. Sufan . . . I—

SUFAN. That wire's for me, bonny, isn't it ?

(*He goes to take it.*)

(QUALTROUGH draws it back. SUFAN becomes suddenly rigid and stares into QUALTROUGH'S eye.)

The boy ? (The words come ache-laden from the heart and are barely audible.)

QUALTROUGH. God help you !

(The big man's face works convulsively. He sways. QUALTROUGH goes to him, but he breaks roughly from him.)

SUFAN. He is killed ?

(QUALTROUGH inclines his head. The others all watch the man's agony with drawn breath. He totters to his chair at the head of the table and sinks into it. He buries his head. PYM removes his hat. First from the collapsed man comes a sound of great indrawing, a great feeding of the airless lungs. Now comes the great cry. He loved as only the Jewish father can love. In his cry is his agony. So Virginius cried on the bier of Virginia. All the pain is in the one cry. Then there is silence. The man is motionless.)

PYM (sobs and cries). Oh God ! Oh God !

(HEXT, a good Catholic, makes a rapid sign of the Cross. WOODS picks up his hat and quietly walks from the room. MUDIE follows him. Then HEXT goes, his old head shaking. He seems older and more stooped. PYM goes now, still crying "Oh God ! Oh God !" under his breath.)

(QUALTROUGH opens the telegram and reads it, putting it again in his pocket. The telephone rings. QUALTROUGH goes to it.)

QUALTROUGH. Miss Appleyard ? Yes. It is Qualtrough speaking. Yes, yes. He has just had a duplicate telegram. . . . You are going to Wisbech to fetch her ? . . . God bless you. What's the time of the train. I'll be at Liverpool Street and

go down with you. Yes, yes. I'll be there. Good-bye.

(*After the soft closing of the door behind PYM, SUFAN had lain in silence. Now his shoulders move and he begins to blubber. The great tragedy of his agony is over. He is rather pitying himself.*)

QUALTROUGH. Shall I tell you how he died?

SUFAN (*between his sobs*). Yes . . . Tell me . . . Oh Got! Mein Got! How did it happen?

QUALTROUGH (*opening his evening paper*). It's a very bald account just over the cable. Your boy's name is mentioned for (*he pauses*) acts of extraordinary bravery. He went out in the face of machine gun fire twice and saved two of his fellow officers. He died of his wounds—like a hero. That must be your only consolation. His name will be in every one's mouth.

SUFAN. He's gone . . . Oh, bonny, I can't stand it . . . I'd have given anything to have kept just him. And he didn't— I wonder if he thought of his old father, Qualtrough, when they were shooting. Did he know what it would mean to me?

QUALTROUGH. He surely thought of you—all.

SUFAN. It would have been much better if I'd gone instead of him. . . . Mein kleiner zuneshi, mein kleiner oystev! Dershossen zu weren! (My little sonny. My little chap! To be shot down!) Oh Got! (Oh God!) He was ashamed of me. He never wrote to me. He hated me. He must have hated me. Mein Got. I can't stand it.

(*The tears stream down his face and he constantly dabs them away with a handkerchief.*)

He only cared for his mother.

QUALTROUGH. His mother! She doesn't know yet. Miss Appleyard opened the telegram and I am going down to Wisbech now.

SUFAN. That's right, bonny, you must, you must . . . I can't. I can't. I won't.

QUALTROUGH. I will ask Miss Appleyard to tell her.

SUFAN. Yes, yes. Ask Miss Appleyard. Tell her I can't . . . come home.

QUALTROUGH. She will understand.

(MISS MAKINS appears at the door.)

MISS MAKINS. Oh, sir, excuse me; but there are two reporters asking to see you. I begged them to go away, but they—

QUALTROUGH. What papers?

MISS MAKINS (*glancing at the two cards she holds in her hand*). *The Central Association and the Press Syndicate.*

QUALTROUGH (*to SUFAN*). Will you see them? I think you should if you can bear it. . . . Remember your boy is a national hero and the public has a right to—

SUFAN. Oh, I can't. I can't. . . . Yes, yes, I suppose I must. Yes, bonny. I understand. I'll see them. Just those two. No more.

QUALTROUGH. Send them in, Miss Makins.

(MISS MAKINS nods and retires.)

Don't let them distress you too much. Just tell them what they want to know and send them away. Then lock the door and try and compose yourself. You have to meet your wife soon. If you are brave it will fall more softly on her. (*He places his newspaper on the table by SUFAN*.)

SUFAN. That's right, bonny. You're a pal, a good pal. Come back for me when you can presently. Take me home. Mein Got. I do feel all alone.

(*The door opens to admit two REPORTERS. The first to speak is of gentlemanly appearance and manner.*

The other is of common type, and only removes his bowler hat as an afterthought.)

QUALTROUGH. Good-morning. This is Mr. Sufan.
(QUALTROUGH glances at his watch and exit hurriedly.)

1ST REPORTER. We are very sorry, sir, to have had to come at such a sad moment.

2ND REPORTER. Awfully. (*His expression clashes with his speech.*)

SUFAN. Don't worry, bonnies. (*The sob is still in his voice.*) The public must be served. I'm only a servant. Sit down.

(*He dries his eyes and makes an effort to compose himself. The two REPORTERS sit in the two chairs on the left of the table and produce notebooks.*)

1ST REPORTER. This Mr. Sufan was your son, sir, I understand.

SUFAN. Yes.

1ST REPORTER. Your only son?

SUFAN. My only child. (*Tears again come into his eyes.*)

1ST REPORTER. And his age was—

SUFAN. Twenty-two and six-twelfths.

1ST REPORTER. He was a second lieutenant in the Wessex Fusiliers?

SUFAN. Yes.

1ST REPORTER. How long had he been in Africa?

SUFAN. Barely six months.

2ND REPORTER. Do you mind saying where he was educated?

SUFAN. Repton and Jesus, Cambridge.

1ST REPORTER. Any letters from him lately?

SUFAN. Yes. He wrote . . . I have some here.

1ST REPORTER. The last one, Mr. Sufan. Anything of interest in it?

SUFAN (*producing the letters*). They were always very interesting. This is the last one. Do you want me to read it?

1ST REPORTER. Anything about his life? Any personal detail. I'm sorry to worry you, Mr. Sufan, but the public will be crazy to know the least thing about him.

SUFAN. I'll read one to you and you can write down what you want. (*He reads in a broken husky voice.*) "I was awfully glad to get your letter the day before Christmas. We had no letters for three weeks, which made it all the more fierce. Still in the desert. The game is shy, but we managed to bump (*a sob*) into a strong force of them a week ago. We emerged from the rough up quite all right, with two of ours killed. The Kultur outfit lost more. The everlasting dust wind in the desert makes of life no blooming picnic. Bivouacking by day is putrid"—I think it's putrid, but it's blotted—"it relieves the monotony when enemy aeroplanes drop bombs on us as they do every now and then. (*A sob.*) The last one killed and injured seven men close to me. It's a weird experience when you see the Taube high overhead suddenly turn in towards camp, and the shell hisses its way to earth. We will all be fearfully bucked when the advance penetrates to the good lands of the interior. That will happen soon now by all counts, though there'll be some very still scrapping before we get through the hills. Fancy washing every day! What epicurean, lu—" What's that word? Lucullan, is it?—"Lucullan luxury. I am quite well and fit, and get outside the army rations of bully and biscuit in something under evens every time. It is estimated that this column alone devoured 27,000 plum puddings sent by the South African Committees. This, if known, would be a frightful warning to the Hun. Good-bye now, darling mother. Your loving son, SETON."

(SUFAN breaks down again and buries his head in his arms.)

1ST REPORTER (*after a pause, in which he gives Sufan time to recover*). Was your son, sir, the Seton Sufan who broke the 'Varsity record for the hundred yards?

SUFAN (*still sobbing*). That's right. He was in the cricket eleven too.

1ST REPORTER. I remember. What a splendid fellow he was?

2ND REPORTER. And you, Mr. Sufan? We may say that you—

SUFAN. Is all this going in?

2ND REPORTER. All we can get, I reckon.

SUFAN. Well, I'm—I'm in *Who's Who*.

2ND REPORTER. Oh, of course. But anything more personal?

SUFAN. More personal? (*He rises and paces the room*) More personal. This'll be in all the papers, won't it?—all over the world—America, Colonies, everywhere. Yes. . . . Well, I suppose they will want to know something about me. I'm his father. I'm his father. Why not that? Why not? Well, you can say—you can say—you can say that Mr. Sufan, seen at his City offices, though constantly interrupted by emotion, declared that the blow fell—more heavily on him as he was just about—as he is just preparing for a great new business departure.

2ND REPORTER. Ah, yes. What is that?

SUFAN (*warming to his subject*). Say that Mr. Sufan, the inventor and proprietor of the Famous Staminal Syrup, is about to put on the market a sensational discovery in the hair restorer line to be known as Sufan's Scalp Cream. Can you get that in?

2ND REPORTER. We'll try 'em.

SUFAN (*now slightly excited*). I spend more on advertising than any other firm in London. It ought to go in. Say that the discovery was made accidentally by a world-famed celebrity from whom Mr. Sufan bought the secret at fabulous cost. This Scalp Cream will be sold—

1ST REPORTER (*drily*). Is there anything further you can tell us about your son, Mr. Sufan?

SUFAN. Eh?

1ST REPORTER. Was he by any chance engaged to be married?

SUFAN. Oh no. You can say that the tragic event won't interfere with the production of the new speciality which will be on sale in every country of the globe not later than—

1ST REPORTER. I don't think we need keep you any longer, Mr. Sufan. I am very much obliged to you. Good morning.

(*He leaves the room.*)

2ND REPORTER. Not later than when?

SUFAN. September, bonny. Do you think you can get it in?

2ND REPORTER. Well, if you were to specially make a point of asking me straight, Mr. Sufan, I might—

SUFAN. I know, bonny. And why not, eh? Good morning. You're a sensible chap.

(*He shakes hands with him and while doing so passes over a five pound note.*)

2ND REPORTER. Thank you, sir. I'm sure I hope it will go all right.

SUFAN. Thank you, bonny.

(*Exit 2nd Reporter.*)

I'm sure it ought to. (*He picks up the bottle on the table and smells it, and examines it again.*) Yes, it ought to. It ought to.

(*Enter Miss Makins carrying a letter.*)

MISS MAKINS. This has just come for you, sir. Seeing what the postmark is I thought you'd like to get it at once.

SUFAN. Eh? (*He takes the letter.*) By Jove,

it's from the boy. Oh, my dear, my dear girl, he's written to his old father!

MISS MAKINS. You won't want to be bothered with the letters, sir, will you?

SUFAN. No. But there's one I want to go off at once. Sit down a minute. (*He tears the letter open and hastily scans it.*) Oh listen, listen. He's written to me. (*His voice is breaking rather with joy than with sorrow.*) "Dear father. Please don't send me any more money. I really don't want you to. I can live quite well on my pay. If you send me more, I shall send it back really. Yours, Seton." He didn't want me to give him my money. Oh, my dear, my dear, he must have liked me after all. He didn't want my money. That must have been the last letter he wrote. (*He kisses it.*) Dos teure ingele! (The dear lad!) He didn't want to be a burden to his old father. Oh, mein teuer, teuer kind! (Oh, my dear, dear boy.) (*He is crying almost happily.*) You mustn't bother about me, Miss Makins. You see . . . it was the first . . . the first letter—and just before he was killed. . . . Oh yes, the letter for you. It's only a little one, but it's urgent. Put it down.

(*Miss Makins pulls the typewriter towards her and proceeds to type the letters.*)

It's for Thurston and Thurston, the poster people. "Gentlemen. Let me have designs as quickly as possible for a new poster. I want a pretty girl, head and shoulders and plenty of hair." Underline "plenty." "The more hair the better. Get an R.A. to do it if you can—three or four colour. I don't mind. The lettering will be simple, just 'Sufan's Scalp Cream Done It.' Yours faithfully."

MISS MAKINS. "Done It." Wouldn't "Did It" be better?

SUFAN. Eh? No. We'll have "Done It." It isn't good grammar but people don't stop to look

at good grammar. . . . Why didn't he want any money? The dear lad! I'd rather he'd have had it. Mein Got! I'd rather he'd have had it. . . . Add a postscript, my dear. Tell 'em it must be a fair girl. Golden hair, piles of golden. That's what women want. You can be the model for the picture, Miss Makins. Yes, I'd rather he'd have had it. But he didn't want it. Didn't want to bleed me. The lad wouldn't do that. Still, it's funny. He knew the money was nothing to me. I never refused any money, eh, Miss Makins? I shouldn't have got where I am if I'd started by refusing money. (*He almost chuckles.*) He wasn't the son of his father,

(*She hands him the typed letter.*)

By Jove, he wasn't the son of his father. (*He dips a pen in the ink and signs the letter.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III

AFTER THE WAR.

SCENE.—*The Music Room, 31a, Arlington Street. (As in Act I.)*

The mirror which surmounted the mantelpiece in the first act has gone and its place is taken by a large, full length oil painting of SETON SUFAN. There are spring flowers in the room now. On a shelf of the music cabinet against the left wall are about a dozen pink monthly Army Lists and three or four quarterly Army Lists.

(When the curtain rises MISS APPLEYARD is discovered at the piano. She is softly playing the same air as played by MRS. SUFAN towards the opening of Act I. RANDOLPH QUALTROUGH is sitting on the settee by the fire, R. MISS APPLEYARD may wear what she likes but one imagines her in a Dolly Varden costume of print, black or dark blue stones round her white throat, and her very glorious hair piled high. Every man over forty in the audience should say: "If that beggar in the light grey lounge suit doesn't get up quick and hug her I'll do it myself.")

QUALTROUGH (with a note of excitement in his voice). How wet it was last Thursday!

MISS APPLEYARD. Indeed, yes. Let's see. Today is Thursday. It is just a week ago since it was wet.

QUALTROUGH (twitching with emotion). Just a week. March is usually—awful, of course.

MISS APPLEYARD. It will be April on Saturday.
QUALTROUGH. By Jove, so it will. April on Saturday. April on Saturday. April on Saturday.

(*He repeats the phrase again and again to keep him from fainting with excitement, just as Oscar Wilde would say "Poison from Paris. Poison from Paris!"*)

MISS APPLEYARD. "Oh, to be in England——" what is that quotation?

QUALTROUGH. April on Saturday!

(*He gets up and, with a courage that surprises him, goes near enough to her to enable him to sit on the chair above table C.*)

MISS APPLEYARD. I think it was Browning, but I wouldn't bet. I always mix him up with Cowper, don't you?

QUALTROUGH (*gloomily*). Is that the man who wrote Gray's Elegy in a country churchyard?

MISS APPLEYARD. Oh no, but he's the man who might have written it.

QUALTROUGH. That's what I meant. It is the one thing that has deterred me from playing golf at Stoke Poges.

MISS APPLEYARD (*reproachfully*). Oh, do you play golf?

QUALTROUGH. Eh? . . . Er—why?

MISS APPLEYARD. I don't like golfers. They seem to belong to another race—the people who existed before the war.

QUALTROUGH. I'm not much of a golfer. I only write to the papers about it. . . .

(*There is a silence. Qualtrough rises jerkily and goes to the piano to lean against the hollow of it.*)

QUALTROUGH. What's that you're playing?

MISS APPLEYARD. It's Mrs. Sufan's favourite. Very fascinating, isn't it? I can't resist playing it.

(She rises and crosses R. to sit on the settee, putting her feet up.) Busy just now?

QUALTROUGH. Oh yes.

MISS APPLEYARD. Finished the book?

QUALTROUGH. Oh yes. That's why—— (He pauses.)

MISS APPLEYARD. Yes?

QUALTROUGH. Well, I shouldn't be loafing about if I hadn't finished it. (He moves to the music cabinet and fiddles with the books.)

MISS APPLEYARD. You certainly seem particularly aimless this morning.

QUALTROUGH. Aimless! (To himself.) Good Lord!

MISS APPLEYARD. Why not come and sit beside me on the couch?

QUALTROUGH. May I? There doesn't seem to be much room.

MISS APPLEYARD. Don't be alarmed. I will move my feet.

(He watches her move them and then he sits on the couch as far from her as possible. There is again an awkward pause.)

QUALTROUGH. Are you going out?

MISS APPLEYARD. Very soon, I think.

QUALTROUGH. Where is Mrs. Sufan?

MISS APPLEYARD. She is out.

QUALTROUGH. Yes? . . . And Mr. Sufan?

MISS APPLEYARD. He is in.

QUALTROUGH. Yes? Is he going out?

MISS APPLEYARD. Not till this afternoon.

QUALTROUGH. Ah! . . . Do you know where he is going?

MISS APPLEYARD (sighing). Yes. He is mayor of one of the South London boroughs, you know. I never remember which, but it's the one where his works are. The King goes there this afternoon to open a new hospital. He will have to be present.

QUALTROUGH. I see.

MISS APPLEYARD. I hope it will be fine.

QUALTROUGH. Yes, indeed.

(There is again a pause. MISS APPLEYARD rises and goes up stage a little. Then she comes down shyly and stands by his side.)

MISS APPLEYARD. I really don't think I can wait any longer.

QUALTROUGH. Ah! Must you really go?

MISS APPLEYARD. I see I must help you out.

QUALTROUGH. Miss Appleyard!

MISS APPLEYARD. I will marry you, dear, if you want me.

QUALTROUGH (jumping to his feet). Eh! . . .
(He takes her left hand). Oh, you darling! You have guessed!

MISS APPLEYARD (demurely). Yes, dear. I have guessed.

(He advances to her. She does not move, but drops her head. He raises her head and kisses her lips. Then he draws back speechless with amazement at his temerity. Now she comes to him, impulsively. She flings her arms round his neck and this time, as she is kissed, her knees give way under her so that he has to support her almost as if she were swooning in his arms. It is a kiss of abandonment in contrast to the first timorous salute.)

QUALTROUGH. Rose, how you must despise me! But I dreaded your refusal. It didn't seem possible that—

MISS APPLEYARD. You dear, dear thing. Sit down and then you won't look so long.

(They both sit on the couch.)

You're not a bit modern and I like you all the better for it.

QUALTROUGH. You see, you were engaged before and to such a—

MISS APPLEYARD. Oh yes. To Lord Callander. You're only my second lover and you were so slow. Do you know what Callander did? Took me by the scruff of the neck, kissed me and said: "Now you belong to me, old Tiddley-winks, and any other bloke who comes along will get punched."

QUALTROUGH. Did he?

MISS APPLEYARD. He did. Don't you wish now that you had his impudence?

QUALTROUGH. It isn't all my fault, darling. I was going to ask you on the very day when the news arrived of Seton's death. But, of course, that was hardly the occasion—well, I had to think of Mrs. Sufan and—

MISS APPLEYARD. Oh, I'm glad you didn't. I wasn't nearly so keen on you then.

QUALTROUGH. Oh, you weren't.

MISS APPLEYARD. Oh no! . . . I think you've grown on me, Randolph. Randolph! Such a lovely name, and so distinguished!

QUALTROUGH. Think so?

MISS APPLEYARD. Rather! Our children are sure to be clever.

QUALTROUGH. Hooray for "our children!"

MISS APPLEYARD. Oh, Randolph! For how many weeks on end do you think you could be utterly idiotic?

QUALTROUGH. Eternally. Let's make up our minds to be frivolous for ever.

(They kiss.)

MISS APPLEYARD. When shall we marry?

QUALTROUGH. Well, to-day's Thursday, isn't it? Friday's unlucky. I'm playing rackets on Saturday. Yes—all day. The trains are all rotten on Sunday. What about Monday morning?

MISS APPLEYARD. Dear old tyrant! I'd marry

you this afternoon, Randolph, but you know there is somebody to be faced.

QUALTROUGH. Mrs. Sufan.

MISS APPLEYARD. I dread telling her. It will be awful. We are friends in a way that no man could understand, especially since Seton's death. . . . And she becomes more and more unhappy with her husband.

QUALTROUGH. Surely he is good to her.

MISS APPLEYARD. He does not knock her about, if that is what you mean. A man, especially one of his race, does not wilfully damage his property. I cannot say anything better of him than that. He seemed to soften and improve slightly about the time that Seton died but it all disappeared as soon as the new Scalp Cream began to boom. He is on the road to being a millionaire. Imagine what that will mean for Mrs. Sufan. And she will be really and truly all alone when I go.

QUALTROUGH. But you will go.

MISS APPLEYARD. Yes. Because I love you.

(*He takes her in his arms.*)

There is a mourner for every lover and a sigh for every kiss. (*She kisses him.*) It is very often when we are happiest that we are most cruel. It's no use worrying over it, Randolph. It's the game. It isn't cricket. But it's the game. (*She gently releases herself.*)

(*QUALTROUGH rises and goes to the fireplace R.*)

I wonder what she will do. I wonder what she will do.

(*The door opens to admit LUKE SUFAN. He is correctly and smartly dressed in black morning coat and grey trousers. The suit becomes him admirably and he undeniably cut a handsome figure. His hair is very carefully dressed to suggest plentifullness.*)

QUALTROUGH. Ho, ho. Best party kit, eh ?

MISS APPLEYARD. Doesn't he look smart ?

SUFAN (*who is in rare good spirits*). Ha, ha ! Fills the picture, doesn't it ? Yes, I think we shall manage to carry it off all right.

QUALTROUGH (*who knows quite well*). But why this sartorial splendour to-day particularly ?

SUFAN. To-day, bonny, I am to be presented to the King. That's all. I'm to be presented to the King. Any remarks ? No ribald jeers, I take it. All in order and cash on delivery—Good Lord ! Supposing it rains !

MISS APPLEYARD. Is Mrs. Sufan going ?

SUFAN. Eh ? I don't know. I suppose not. . . . Here, bonny ! Miss Appleyard !

(*They come to him and he holds them by the arms.*)

I've had the office.

MISS APPLEYARD. The office !

SUFAN. I've had the office, the nod, the tip, you know. I'm to be knighted this afternoon. (*He chuckles.*)

MISS APPLEYARD. Really !

SUFAN. Re-blooming-ally.

QUALTROUGH. I congratulate you, Sufan. Splendid !

(*They shake hands. MISS APPLEYARD crosses to the fireplace.*)

MISS APPLEYARD. What will Mrs. Sufan say ?,

SUFAN. Ah, yes. Wait until the wife hears it. Eh ? Her Ladyship ! Her Ladyship ! Not yet, but at half past three sharp, "Her Ladyship." Ah, bonny, it means a lot to a woman.

QUALTROUGH. Yes, yes. As you say. It will mean a lot to her. . . . So it has come at last. (*He joins MISS APPLEYARD at the fireplace.*)

SUFAN. Yes, bonny, at last. Can you fix me at 21 scraping a fiddle for a guinea a night and now

Sir Luke, with the biggest patent medicine business in London and an option on a corner house in Grosvenor Square. Life's the funniest thing in the world. That's what I always say.

(*He actually executes a few steps of a cake walk. QUALTROUGH and Miss APPLEYARD both laugh.*)

Won't the boys make a fuss, old Hext and Pym and the others ! The beggars ! They'll expect a champagne lunch. Strictly, they ought to give me something. There ought to be congratulatory dinner, oughtn't there ? (*He has his back to them.*) I wouldn't mind paying for the wines. Presentation portrait wouldn't be bad. Compliment to her Ladyship and all that. What do you say to—

(*He turns and catches Qualtrough pressing Miss Appleyard's hand.*)

Hello ! Hello ! Hello ! Bonny, you don't mean to say you've stormed the fortress at last.

QUALTROUGH (*laughing*). Well, the fortress is mine at any rate.

SUFAN. Well, for a chap of your length, you were the most chicken-hearted—but it's all right now, eh ?

MISS APPLEYARD. We are engaged. He accepted me without a struggle.

SUFAN (*laughing boisterously*). It was that way, was it ? Well, I'm glad.

(*He holds out his hands to Miss Appleyard and she puts hers in his.*)

I'll be very, very sorry when you go. Very, very sorry, my dear. Missus hasn't nagged half so much since you came. Can't stand her glaring at me if I make a bloomer. You choked her off a bit, I know. Yes, I'm very sorry you're going. Of course, she'll grizzle like blazes. (*He walks away.*)

(*Qualtrough and Miss Appleyard look a little awkward.*)

. . . What on earth do you say when it's over ? Do you know, Qualtrough ?

QUALTROUGH. When it's over ? When it's over ? How do you mean ?

SUFAN. Why, after you've been smacked and all that.

QUALTROUGH. Oh-h-h ! You mean this afternoon, after the King has knighted you.

SUFAN. Certainly, bonny.

QUALTROUGH. What do you say ? Goodness knows !

MISS APPLEYARD. You can hardly say "Thanks awfully." (*She crosses left.*)

SUFAN. Get hold of the poker, Qualtrough.

QUALTROUGH. The poker !

SUFAN. Yes. We'll have a rehearsal. But for goodness sake be careful. I got into an awful row once for poking the fire with that poker. It seems it's Flemish manufacture or something, too good to be useful.

(*QUALTROUGH gets the poker.*)

Now, look here, you say—what do you say ?

QUALTROUGH. Well, I command you to kneel.

SUFAN. That's right. . . . Which knee ?

MISS APPLEYARD. Perhaps it's both knees.

SUFAN. Don't be spiteful. One's bad enough. (*He struggles down on one knee.*) Now, which shoulder do you tap on ?

(*Enter MRS. SUFAN.*)

MRS. SUFAN (*in blank amazement*). Whatever—are—you—doing ?

(*QUALTROUGH puts back the poker and SUFAN struggles to his feet.* MRS. SUFAN wears a gown of slate and deep purple. It owes nothing to Bakst but will be ascribed to him by many of the audience who ought to know better. On her head is a hat that is a decora-

tion not a head-covering. The mark of her recent loss is upon her, but hers is a face that is rather beautified by tragedy.)

SUFAN (*ignoring her astonishment*). Hello, my dear. You're back early. And just in time, just in time. What do you think has happened since you went out?

MRS. SUFAN. I have no idea.

SUFAN. Ha, ha! Had a visitor. Little chap with a bow and arrow. Fired two shots and—

MRS. SUFAN. What is he talking about, Mr. Qualtrough?

QUALTROUGH. Mrs. Sufan, I—he means that Miss Appleyard has promised to be my wife.

MRS. SUFAN (*turning and fixing her eyes on Miss Appleyard*). You! You are going! . . . I congratulate you both. . . . You will be very happy, Mr. Qualtrough.

(*She holds out her hand and he shakes it. Miss Appleyard rises. Mrs. Sufan seems to be about to go to her and kiss her but instead she leaves the room very quietly. There is a pause. Miss Appleyard looks from Sufan to Qualtrough and then impulsively hurries out after Mrs. Sufan.*)

SUFAN (*shaking his fist at Qualtrough*). You're a damned nuisance! She'll sulk for weeks over this.

QUALTROUGH (*groaning*). I knew that part of it would be awful.

SUFAN. They're inseparable—or I thought they were. If it hadn't been for that girl the boy's death would have killed her. I shall have her start grizzling all over again. Damn it! I can't stand her grizzling.

QUALTROUGH. Perhaps it will be possible for us to live near. Rose might—

SUFAN. Humbug! You've got the girl. Don't share her—least of all with a woman. There is only one person that she has to bother her head about for the future and that's you. Let her have a canary if

she likes but draw the line at a lap dog. Toy Pomeranians break up more homes than chorus girls.

QUALTROUGH. You'll remember that I've been pretty patient. You ought to tell your wife that. You know I was going to ask her on the day you heard of Seton's death.

SUFAN. That's right, bonny. . . . Have you seen his name in the Army List? (*He goes to the music cabinet left and gets down a quarterly Army List.*) I've got every one, Monthly and Quarterly, in which his name appears. There's the last entry. (*His voice is hushed.*) "Deaths. Sufan, 2nd Lieutenant (local Lieutenant) Seton Arkington, Royal Fusiliers . . . Lokoja, Northern Nigeria," and the date. See the crossed swords before his name. That means war service. I ought to cut it out and frame it, oughtn't I?

(*He puts the book back and crossing to the fireplace, stands looking up at SETON'S portrait. Enter ADOLF.*)

ADOLF. Mr. Pym is on the telephone, sir.

SUFAN. Um. I don't want to speak to him this morning. See what he wants, Qualtrough, will you?

(*Exit QUALTROUGH.*)

(ADOLF is going, but SUFAN calls him back.)

SUFAN. Adolf!

ADOLF. Yes, sir? (*He shuts the door behind Qualtrough and comes down to his master.*)

SUFAN. Adolf, do you remember that night when I bought the toothache tincture in Aldersgate Street?

ADOLF. Not likely to forget it, sir.

SUFAN. Make it Luke, Adolf, make it Luke. We can be human beings when we're alone.

(ADOLF smiles his slow, sinister smile.)

What did I say to you when we got outside the chemist's shop?

ADOLF. You mean about the Staminal Syrup, Luke?

SUFAN. Yes. Didn't I say—"Adolf, I got an idea."

ADOLF. You did. And you swore it would make you and it has.

SUFAN. Didn't I say I'd look after you, Adolf?

ADOLF. You did, Luke, and you have.

SUFAN. You were an out-of-work waiter. Out of work. And no character. All the result of adding the date on to the items of the customers' accounts. Nasty trick that, Adolf, specially if it's the 31st of the month. But I stuck to you with all your faults. Half a crown you had out of every guinea I earned and you were the worst pianist in London.

ADOLF. You were a pal, Luke. God bless you.

SUFAN. Don't slobber. You got a good job here and I dare say you're making some pickings. Oh, don't look hurt. I hear about you, mind. But I'm a mug. I say "It's only old Adolf. He'd only be miserable if he wasn't sneaking something." I say, do you remember when we nicked those two bottles of whisky out of the artists' room at Frascati's?

ADOLF (*chuckling*). Don't I? What a night!

SUFAN. Yes, Adolf. They weren't bad days. I never reckoned I'd get as far as this. And I'll bet you never thought of being an Arlington Street butler . . . But listen. Do you know what you're going to be, Adolf? . . . You're going to be the butler to a knight!

ADOLF. You don't mean I've got to leave you.

SUFAN. No, no, no. A knight, a knight, my boy! How about Sir Luke Sufan!

ADOLF. A knight! You!

SUFAN. Certainly.

ADOLF. Luke, you're a marvel!

SUFAN. Put it there, Adolf!

(*They shake hands.*)

And not a word to the servants. Let it take 'em by surprise in the morning. And the first one that doesn't say "Sir Luke" and "My Lady" gets a month's wages in lieu.

ADOLF. I'll see to them. Sir Luke Sufan! It's a blessed miracle! A miracle! You married a Gentile and yet God hasn't cursed you.

SUFAN. I have paid, Adolf, I have paid. The boy!

ADOLF. You will never have paid in full. A goy, Luke, a goy! She'll drag you down yet. Mark my words. She'll drag you down.

SUFAN. Sh-h! He's coming back.

(QUALTROUGH appears at the door.)

You'll get it done at once, Adolf. (*He resumes the attitude of the master.*)

ADOLF. Certainly, sir.

(Exit ADOLF.)

SUFAN (*to Qualtrough*). Ah, bonny, what did he want?

QUALTROUGH. Well, I gather that he knows something. Says he'll be there this afternoon. But he wants to run round this morning and congratulate you.

SUFAN (*chuckling*). Ah, well! Let him come. Let him come. Good little lad! He's got a nose like a weasel.

(MRS. SUFAN appears at the door.)

MRS. SUFAN. Miss Appleyard is just going out, Mr. Qualtrough. You may like to go with her. . . . I was a little abrupt to you just now. I'm sorry. I do indeed congratulate you. I shall miss her, very much. I would have fought to keep her from most men. I let her go willingly to you.

QUALTROUGH (*showing slight emotion*). I am very proud that you should have said that, Mrs. Sufan.

(*He bows to her and leaves the room, closing the door softly behind him.*)

SUFAN. I'm awfully sorry about this, awfully sorry. I'll put an advertisement in the "Morning Post" at once.

MRS. SUFAN. Oh, Luke, don't talk like that. Don't talk like that.

SUFAN (*puzzled*). But you'll have to have another. . . . For Heaven's sake don't mope about it. You know I can't bear having you on the grizzle. Besides you've only heard the bad news of the day. What about the good news?

MRS. SUFAN (*sitting in chair above table c.*). Ah! . . . Have you made another million, or—

SUFAN. You know where I am going this afternoon?

MRS. SUFAN. Somewhere in—Lambeth, isn't it?

SUFAN. Never mind. Who's going to be there beside me?

MRS. SUFAN. I won't guess.

SUFAN. Who's going to be there beside me? . . . I'll tell you. The King!

MRS. SUFAN. Ah, yes.

SUFAN. And I'm to be presented to him.

MRS. SUFAN. So that's why you look so new this morning.

SUFAN. Don't I look all right? You're always trying to pull me down a peg. But I guess you'll be a little more civil after to-day.

MRS. SUFAN. What on earth has happened or is going to happen?

SUFAN (*striking an attitude*). This afternoon I am to be knighted.

MRS. SUFAN. You—are going—to be knighted!

(*She says it in scarcely a complimentary way.*)

SUFAN. I am. (*He chuckles and rubs his hands*). Eh, my lady? Eh, my lady? At half past three no more of the Mrs. but—Lady Sufan. What do you say to that, eh?

MRS. SUFAN. But you—you surely—I congratulate you.

SUFAN. Not forgetting yourself, eh? Ha, ha! Can't you see it on your cards? "Lady Sufan." Just that. Nothing more. And I've got an option on a corner house in Grosvenor Square. Royalty had it once. Only gave it up because of the rats. By George, we'll make things hum. . . . What's up? You don't look very cheerful about it.

MRS. SUFAN. Eh? I—(*affecting pleasure which she does not feel.*)—I think it's splendid for you, Luke. Splendid! You've worked so hard. And you wanted it so badly. And—

SUFAN. Oh, I don't know about that. I've never thought twice about the thing, but I suppose it was bound to come. Still, it gives one a certain class, eh?

MRS. SUFAN. Yes. It admits one to a—certain class.

SUFAN. There's been a lot of people too good for me. I'll show 'em now. Some of those damned country people, eh? Sir Luke Sufan, Knight, will be a different proposition to the "old hair oil merchant."

MRS. SUFAN. Luke, Luke, please don't run away with that idea. There's a good man. You will find this—handle useful in your business. That is all.

SUFAN. Business be hanged! I'm after bigger game now. We'll have to entertain. Have the right people round to dinner. Get a good chef. Have a box at the opera. Buy some race horses perhaps. That gets the Duchesses after you. What about Parliament, eh? How about Sir Luke Sufan, Knight, M.P.?

MRS. SUFAN. Surely you don't wish to do anything so inexpressibly vulgar?

SUFAN. Vulgar! Vulgar! Look here, I've heard enough of that word. Damn it, if you aren't ungrateful. Your father christened you Ellen Arkington. I christen you Lady Sufan. (*Rather to himself.*)

And how the dickens can a member of Parliament be vulgar, I'd like to know ?

MRS. SUFAN. Luke, Luke, I only want to help you. I have often felt so sorry for you. I am sorry for you now, sorry for what this honour may bring upon you. Believe me, Luke, I can guide you. Don't lose your temper with me.

SUFAN (*his eyes bulging*). You're—sorry—for me ! You're—sorry—for—me ! Well, if that doesn't beat cock-fighting.

MRS. SUFAN. I understand you, Luke. This pretty title has dazzled you like your first diamond ring. You want a little shadow, a little cool air. Try and look at the whole business in its proper perspective. If you can't see for yourself, let me see for you. Do as I tell you—and ignore every one else's advice. Do you know, Luke, that you have only one candid friend ?

SUFAN (*slightly mollified*). Of course I want you to help. . . . We work together. Man and wife must . . . I couldn't go any further without you. And I'll listen to you about whom to have at the house, and so on, if that's what you mean.

MRS. SUFAN. I don't think you will, Luke. They would have to be very, very different from the shady sycophants that you bring into the house now.

SUFAN (*angrily*). They're all right. They're business men. They're my class. They helped me to make me what I am and they helped to make you, Lady Sufan.

MRS. SUFAN. God forgive them ! They had a big hand in the un-making of you. They have made something new of the Luke Sufan I once knew—and loved.

SUFAN. Don't talk like that ! You love me still, don't you?

MRS. SUFAN. It has not occurred to you to ask that for over twenty years.

SUFAN. It wasn't necessary ! Not necessary—to ask.

MRS. SUFAN. That was how you felt. Yes . . . Luke, your heart is not mine. It is in your business, Do you remember where it was before ?

SUFAN (*testily*). Oh, say what you mean.

MRS. SUFAN. In me and in your music. I didn't mind sharing you with your music. . . . You took your violin with you on our honeymoon and I was not jealous. Far from it. So long as you loved your music, so long should I love you.

SUFAN. Precious ass I should look prancing round with a fiddle at my age.

MRS. SUFAN. You have said it. You have said it. . . . Don't you understand that when I talk of your violin I talk of all the noble side of you, all that part of your nature which once rejoiced with me in what was true and beautiful.

SUFAN. A man ages. What is all that foolishness of youth to look back upon ? You might just as well cry for your first rattle or first box of soldiers. A man ages. A man ages. Don't women age ?

MRS. SUFAN. Happiness ages. Love ages. And both should grow riper. We were happy only for a poor little two years. Then the demon of lust—lust for wealth and power—possessed you. You fell among thieves, men who would make you a thief. Don't deny that. Your only excuse is that you are one of them. That demon destroyed the angel in you. Your violin fell to pieces in a dirty corner—and you drove your wife from her home.

SUFAN. For God's sake ! You promised never—

MRS. SUFAN. We both promised to forget—but neither of us saw very far into the future. Now I must recall all that, that you may fully understand. . . . You drove me out in an hour of brutal madness—and you little knew, you little knew what punishment that act would bring upon me.

(*This reference SUFAN, of course, misunderstands.*)

I came back. You promised that you would be the

Luke of old, not the stranger whose very presence disgusted me. . . . But you never kept your word.

SUFAN (*hoarsely*). I was working—working, like a fiend.

MRS. SUFAN. For yourself. . . . For yourself. . . . Only for my boy's sake did I endure the life I have endured for the last twenty years. . . . Now he has gone.

SUFAN (*beginning to suspect something of her intention*). And now?

MRS. SUFAN. Now you want me to travel in new ways, ways of your choosing. You want me to accompany you into a fresh career of vulgar ambition, to be your hostess for further fools. You want me to take over the job of the hotel keeper, see that the cook is right and the servants capable—servants controlled by that thieving scoundrel, Adolf. You want me to look the part of Lady Sufan. And for these things only do you want me. For twenty years you have only wanted me for selfish reasons. And now you want to double my dose of humiliation. Luke (*almost tenderly*), I cannot ride with you along this new road. I cannot. Even if I agreed my promise would be worse than useless. I must break it, and, inevitably, I would hamper, perhaps destroy, an ambition with which I have no sympathy.

SUFAN. If an angel from heaven had descended to tell me this I would not have believed it.

MRS. SUFAN. I know. That is what has held me back so long. I knew it would shock you.

SUFAN. This—from you? From you, Ellen!

MRS. SUFAN. The worm turns.

SUFAN (*fiercely*). I don't want to hear that.

MRS. SUFAN. You know it. You are only surprised that the worm should so far forget itself on your Turkey carpet.

SUFAN. I am surprised—surprised because I believed in you. I am surprised because, however I

have failed you, you have never failed me. I am surprised because—because you are my wife.

MRS. SUFAN. That's it. I know the strength and weight of the chain. But you have given me power to break it.

SUFAN. To break it! To break it! (*He gazes at her in amazement and slowly realizes that she means what she says.*) "Be not against me to desire that I should leave thee and depart; for whithersoever thou shalt go I will go, and where thou shalt dwell I also will dwell."

MRS. SUFAN. I'm sure we can settle matters quite calmly. If we argue or—or quote the Bible, we will lose our tempers.

SRFAN. What do you mean by "settle matters?" There is only one way of settling them. You are my wife and you shall go your husband's way.

MRS. SUFAN. No. . . . Unless that way were a new way—and I am afraid it is too late now.

SUFAN. And is it for you to dictate, woman? How long have you held that view?

MRS. SUFAN. I never dictated. I implored. You promised and broke your promise. Now it's all over—finally.

SUFAN. What are you threatening me with?

MRS. SUFAN. Luke, I must leave you.

SUFAN. Leave me!

MRS. SUFAN. Yes.

SUFAN. You are mad. You are mine. How have I wronged you? Leave me! I have been faithful. I've worked for—yes, for you. You're the mother of my dead son.

MRS. SUFAN. Don't drag him in.

SUFAN. I will. By Heaven, I will. I'd have him here to listen to your shameful words if I could.

MRS. SUFAN. Listen, listen, listen. You have been faithful. Save on that one fateful and terrible occasion when your humanity seemed temporarily to leave you, you have been in the eyes of

the world a tolerable husband. No man or woman on God's earth would justify me. And I don't want their justification. I don't want a word of sympathy. I shall leave you because—because—oh! I do so want to spare you. (*Shrilly.*) Can't you believe me, man, when I tell you I am suffering agony this moment here in this room that has been paid for out of rotten patent medicines, in the shadow of the portrait of my son, paid for out of rotten patent medicine, in the company of a husband who has bought a knighthood out of rotten patent medicines. . . . Hear me out! Can't you realize what agony your society constantly causes me? You, whose soul was once in the finer things of life, now revelling, rioting in money and all the contemptible instead of the beautiful things that money could buy. Oh, I know you'd buy me a Corot or a Tanagra, but could I ever see them through anything but a smear of Sufan's Scalp Cream? Can't you guess even vaguely at the shame I feel at my failure? Can't you guess how I despise myself for failing to save you for the better life for which, before God, you were made. . . . You, Luke, you who had this noble gift as your birthright. You, who played your violin so that all my life I felt I must worship! You—to have sunk to quackery and a purchased knighthood! I could find it in my heart to forgive your contemptuous treatment of me. God knows it must be partly my fault that I have no more of your confidence than one of the housemaids. I have borne all that long and could go on bearing it. . . . But what I cannot bear is the change in you. I cannot live with you because you are not the man I loved and married. You are making more money out of your horrible business. You are to be knighted. Everything will be worse, far worse. It would drive me mad. . . . I have never cried over you. My heart is stone. What you were . . . what you were . . .

I might have—— (*Her words dry up in her throat.*)
SUFAN (*after a pause*). Oh God, you women ! You women ! What chance does a man get ? I've been straight, dead straight. . . . I've got there. Made you Lady Sufan. And you want to go. . . . Just as I'm on top. I've never heard anything like this. (*Rather to himself*.) I know they'll leave you if you're a failure. I've heard of that often enough. But when you've done it ! Got there. And a knighthood ! . . . And all this because I used to play the fiddle. Damn the thing ! . . . Look here, you don't mean all this. I'll try and —try and—

MRS. SUFAN. I mean it all. We must separate, Luke.

SUFAN. But—the scandal. Woman, woman, the scandal ! Do you want to ruin me ?

MRS. SUFAN. Ruin you ? Won't it be something of an advertisement ?

SUFAN. Advertisement, advertisement ! Yes, yes. But advertisement of the wrong sort. Good heavens, yes ! A man who sells patent medicines has got to lead a pure life and so have all his family. The public insists on it. They'll give a Cabinet Minister a fairly wide margin, but the man who sells a corn-killer has *got* to go straight. Do you remember old Bilthorpe of Bilthorpe's Blood Purifier ? His son, only his son, mind you, got divorced and old Bilthorpe's sales dropped a million bottles. . . . You leave me and, by Heaven, you'll go near smashing me.

MRS. SUFAN. There would be poetic justice in that.

SUFAN. What do you mean ? Justice ? You'd desert me and ruin me at the same time ? Ellen, you've turned a very devil.

MRS. SUFAN. I don't believe it would have any effect of the sort.

SUFAN. Wouldn't it ? Half the religious papers

would stop their "advt." at once, and they're far away the best medium.

MRS. SUFAN. Well, and if I did smash the business. It's all it deserves.

SUFAN. All it deserves? Smash a good business. Smash a good business? . . . The woman's going off her head—clean off her head.

MRS. SUFAN. Good business! . . . Yes, I've no doubt it is. . . . But it's a swindle and you know it.

SUFAN (*flabbergasted*). A swindle! Sufan's Scalp Cream a swindle. (*He runs his hands through his hair.*)

MRS. SUFAN. Yes. A vulgar swindle. You know quite well the stuff is worthless, both that old beastly Staminal and the new stuff, though I shouldn't be surprised to find they are one and the same thing.

SUFAN (*guiltily*). Nonsense!

MRS. SUFAN. They've been forced on the public by clever advertising. But everybody who buys a bottle is swindled—and swindled by you!

SUFAN. Swindled! How dare you!

MRS. SUFAN. Yes. Swindled! You charge half-a-crown for a mess that's not worth more than 2d. Isn't that the truth?

SUFAN. And what if it is? The stuff's good and it's the cost of the advertising that puts its price up.

MRS. SUFAN. Cost of advertising, indeed! If a burglar breaks into your safe, is he any less a criminal because he uses expensive tools? You've dragged something out of me that I meant to keep to myself. But perhaps it's for the best.

SUFAN (*deeply hurt*). Oh, I'm a swindler, am I? . . . A swindler! Do you hear that, Luke Sufan? . . . Here's a woman leaving a man because he's a swindler. . . . First time in history, Luke, as long as he was a successful swindler. . . . (*Suddenly he swoops down on his wife and shouts.*) Look here, woman, no more lies. Where are you going?

MRS. SUFAN. Where?

SUFAN. Yes where? . . . Who to? . . .

(*She turns with revulsion from him. He watches for a moment and then he seizes her arm and leads her to the portrait of Seton.*)

What would he have said to this?

MRS. SUFAN. I have already told you that I won't have my boy dragged in.

SUFAN. "My boy." "My boy." Not so much of the "my boy." (*He roars.*) Our boy! . . . Do you hear?

MRS. SUFAN (*frightened*). Well—our boy.

SUFAN. What would he have said? Ah, I know he didn't think much of me. I dare say I've got you to thank for that. He looked down on the old patent medicine merchant. And where is he now? You know what the Book says: "The eye that mocketh at his father . . . the ravens of the valley shall pick it out and the young eagles shall eat it." Do you ever think of that, you who taught him to despise me? But what about the knighthood, eh? That would have helped him with his pals. He wouldn't have been ashamed of me now. But what would he have thought of his mother? Eh? What do those army gentry think of chaps whose mothers run away from their husbands? Woman, if he were alive, he'd curse you for this, and you know it.

MRS. SUFAN. I think I know what my boy would have thought.

SUFAN (*sneering*). Oh, he was very much your property, wasn't he? All for you, and all that. None of his father's qualities, thank God, eh? Isn't that it?

MRS. SUFAN. I'll tell you this—that Seton earned the knighthood for you. You'd never have got it for money alone—money made as you made it.

That boy's heroic death was necessary for your glory.

SUFAN (*fiercely and under his breath*). Don't dare say that. I'd sooner have died than he.

MRS. SUFAN (*after a pause*). Yes . . . I believe that. . . . Yes. I believe that. (*She is sincere. The knowledge adds to her agony.*)

SUFAN. And if his death did help his father ! Have you anything to say against that ? Would any natural wife complain at that ? Don't hide your head there grizzling. Just listen to me. You're going to leave me. Well, I can't stop you. You can go at once—go at once—do you hear. And you'll starve ! Not one penny do you get from me.

MRS. SUFAN. I do not want it. I shall not starve.

SUFAN. What are you going to do ? What's the good of you ? You can't work. You haven't got a halfpenny—or you hadn't when I married you.

MRS. SUFAN. I shall not starve. I have enough to live on.

SUFAN. Where the devil did you get it from ?

MRS. SUFAN (*hesitatingly*). It is no business of yours now.

SUFAN. Yes, it is. And you shall tell me. Tell me now, now, now, right away—or I'll have every inch of your room searched.

(MRS. SUFAN *winces*.)

Ah, that moved you. Perhaps you'd rather there wasn't a search, eh, my fine lady ? . . . Where does the money come from ?

MRS. SUFAN. From an old friend.

SUFAN (*sneering*). An old friend. An old friend ! And for what particular reason, pray, does the old friend give money to the wife of a man who's practically a millionaire ?

MRS. SUFAN (*leaping to her feet*). He is dead ! He bequeathed the money to me.

SUFAN (*slightly relieved, for this is plausible*). Oh !

And why wasn't I told about it? Why all this secrecy?

MRS. SUFAN. It concerned you in no way. It was really very little, or you'd have called it very little. I—I—

SUFAN (*cruelly*). Go on!

MRS. SUFAN. It never occurred to me that you—that you would expect to be told.

SUFAN. Ah. . . . And if you had died before me it would of course have been a pleasing little legacy from my devoted wife. Husband naturally not expected to inquire where the money comes from. Oh dear no.

MRS. SUFAN (*hastily*). It wasn't meant to go to—
(She stops, recognizing the danger.)

SUFAN. It wasn't meant to go to whom? Not to me! That's what you meant. Then who, pray, would it have gone to?

(She does not answer.)

Why not your husband? Why leave it to any one else? You have no relations. Ah, perhaps it was in trust. Answer. Was it in trust?

MRS. SUFAN (*very fearfully*). Yes.

SUFAN. And for? (He looks up at SETON'S portrait.) For whom, woman? . . . For whom, woman?

MRS. SUFAN (*recovering herself*). I held it in trust for my boy.

SUFAN. "For my boy." For Seton. . . . And who in the name of all that is damnable dared leave money so without my knowledge or consent?

MRS. SUFAN. An old friend. Major-General Sterling.

SUFAN. Never heard of him.

MRS. SUFAN. You have never met him. But you have heard of him.

SUFAN. Sterling? Sterling? Ah, there was a Colonel Sterling.

MRS. SUFAN. He was a Colonel when you heard of him. Afterwards he was made a Major-General.

SUFAN (*knitting his brows*). Major-General Sterling ! Ah-h, yes ! Colonel Sterling ! That was the snob that I had to cut out, wasn't it ? Your father wanted you to marry him, didn't he ? Yes, yes. And you very nearly did. Very fond of him you were too. You told me that. How charmingly sentimental ! And the fellow's dead, is he ? That's a pretty good job. Dead, eh ? When did he die ?

MRS. SUFAN. A month before Seton.

SUFAN (*sharply*). You connect 'em up pretty glibly, don't you ? Why the devil can't you give the date ?

MRS. SUFAN. In December, 1914.

(SUFAN goes to the music cabinet and gets down one of the Quarterly Army Lists, the one immediately preceding that in which the notification of SETON'S death appears.)

SUFAN. He'll be in here if you're not lying.

(MRS. SUFAN clenches her teeth. SUFAN turns up the page headed "Deaths.")

Yes. Right enough. "Sterling, Major-General Seton Douglas, C.B., retired pay, Reserve of Officers, on the 3rd of December." H'm. (*He smiles.*) He had a lot to leave, I'll be—here ! Where the devil did the man get his Christian name ?

MRS. SUFAN (*breathlessly*). What ?

SUFAN. His Christian name ! "Seton." Here, did you call our boy after him ?

MRS. SUFAN (*stammering*). I—I—I—

SUFAN (*on the edge of a suspicion which terrifies him*). You did, didn't you ? You did ?

MRS. SUFAN. Yes. I—

SUFAN (*roaring*). Well, why shouldn't you ? Why shouldn't you, woman ? Boy's got to have

a name. Call him after an old friend? Why not? What are you shaking about?

MRS. SUFAN. You're frightening me. You're so brutal.

SUFAN. Brutal! Bosh! Why wasn't I told? What was the mystery about?

MRS. SUFAN. There was no mystery. I didn't—I didn't mention it because I thought you might be a little jealous.

SUFAN (*trying to convince himself*). Yes. That's all right. That's right enough. Very natural. I'm not making a fuss about it. Doesn't matter what the boy was called. Doesn't matter a damn! I didn't care what he was christened and I don't care now.

(*He crosses moodily to the fireplace and looks up at the portrait as if he would read the secret of the awful suspicion that is haunting him, and returns to the table where the Army List is.*)

So it's his money, eh? Yes. He's dead right enough. "Sterling, Seton Douglas . . . on the 3rd of December . . . at Polperro, Cornwall." (*He shuts the book with a snap. Suddenly his features undergo a great change.*) Where? (*He opens the book again.*) At Polperro, Cornwall? Was that where he lived permanently?

(*She stares at him terrified as to how to answer.*)

Answer me!

MRS. SUFAN. Yes.

SUFAN. And wasn't it to Polperro that you went when you left my house? Wasn't it at Polperro that you hid from me those two months?

(*Mrs. Sufan is dazed. She stares at him in utter terror and cannot answer.*)

(*At this precise moment, when the audience is worked up, the scene is interrupted by the entrance of Adolf.*)

ADOLF. Mr. Pym to see you, sir.

SUFAN (*angrily*). Send him away. I can't see anybody. (*He hustles ADOLF out and snaps the door on him.*)

(*SUFAN's arm is on the door as it is closing. In fact he helps to close it with a snap. Then, like a released falcon he swoops down on his prey again.*)

SUFAN (*with his back to the door*). Wasn't it at Polperro that you hid from me those two months?

(*He asks the question in precisely the same fierce, excited tones as he asked it before ADOLF'S entrance.*)

MRS. SUFAN. Yes.

SUFAN. Was he there?

MRS. SUFAN. He was.

SUFAN. And you——?

MRS. SUFAN. I stayed at his house.

SUFAN. What!

MRS. SUFAN. Listen! I had practically no money. He was my only friend I had to have shelter.

SUFAN. Why have you hidden this till now?

MRS. SUFAN. There was no need to tell you.

SUFAN. You lied to me. You said you sold some jewellery and stayed at a cottage. Wouldn't that have been a cleaner thing to do?

MRS. SUFAN. I was no judge. I hid as a hunted beast hides. You had hit me. You don't know the strength of your hand. I ran away to where —to where there was some one who might fight for me.

SUFAN (*shamed at the memory*). I know. . . . Yet you came back. Did he want you to go back?

MRS. SUFAN. You can guess.

SUFAN. Yet you came back. Yet you came back. And in a few months—— (*He looks up at SETON'S portrait.*) This man, Sterling, was a widower, wasn't he?

MRS. SUFAN. Yes.

SUFAN. He was willing to steal another man's wife. You would not agree. Why? . . . Why? . . . Oh! (*Suddenly losing control of himself.*) This is driving me mad. Did you love the man?

MRS. SUFAN. After you killed my love for you.

SUFAN. Woman, have you been faithful?

MRS. SUFAN (*forcing herself to lie*). Yes.

SUFAN. There's something in your eyes. You are pitying me. I swear you are trying to keep something from me—yes, and it's for my sake. You're lying, and you're not lying to shield yourself.

MRS. SUFAN. I am not lying.

SUFAN. Have you this man's portrait?

MRS. SUFAN. No!

(*She wears a locket, containing a portrait of the man, attached to a chain under her dress. At his question she involuntarily raises her hands to her breast where the locket is.*)

SUFAN. That's a lie. If you loved him you'd have his portrait. Why did you raise your hands?

MRS. SUFAN. What do you mean?

SUFAN. Pull out that chain.

MRS. SUFAN. I will not.

SUFAN. Pull it out.

(*She draws back, but he roughly seizes her and whips out the locket, breaking the chain.*)

MRS. SUFAN (*wailing in agony*). Luke, Luke, Luke, give me my locket.

SUFAN (*opening the locket and looking at the picture*). It's Seton. (*He says it very quietly with some surprise and not a little relief.*) It's Seton. It's very good. Why didn't you show it to me before? . . . What's the matter?

(*The woman is trembling with terror.*)

It's Seton, isn't it? (*He looks at it again.*)

MRS. SUFAN (*breathless*). Yes. It's Seton.

SUFAN (*his jaw dropping*). Got fun die oves ! It is not my boy.

(*The locket containing the portrait drops to the ground.*)

It is not my boy . . . (*After a pause he goes close to his wife.*) How did you come by that ? (*The tone is quiet and deeply tragic.*)

MRS. SUFAN. He bequeathed it to me.

SUFAN. It is his picture.

MRS. SUFAN (*almost inaudible*). Yes.

SUFAN. At the same age ?

MRS. SUFAN. Yes.

SUFAN (*huskily*). He was the father of your son.

(*She does not answer. The shuddering man endeavours to get control of himself.*)

Half mir in diesem moment, oh Got ! Half mir ! . . . (*He turns his eyes from the woman.*) Go from my sight, you unclean woman ! I was unworthy of you, was I ? You would have gone, leaving me befooled for ever. You would have humiliated me before the world, would you ? That was to be your atonement. Oh, how vile ! How vile !

MRS. SUFAN (*sobbing miserably*). I tried to spare you. I tried to spare you.

SUFAN. Spare me. (*His voice rises.*) You gave me the boy to love, to own, to cherish, to worship, and all the years you were laughing in my face. How you must have sniggered when I took him in my arms. What comedy for you when my heart bled at his death.

(*He raises his hands as if to grip and strangle her.*

The fingers work convulsively while the woman crouches. Suddenly he clenches his hands and prays.)

Lord God of Israel, I give this woman into Thy hands. Thy servant's heart is dead and he is passionless. Take her and deal with her in accord with

her crime. * Dos gerechtigkeit fun vater iz dos gerechtigkeit fun got. Un der wos iz bereubt und verfuhrt geworen, der schreit.

(*The woman, who has been watching him in fear and awe, slinks slowly from the room.*)

Bund zeine hend um er soll nit kennen hargenen, und zein zung er soll nit kennen schilten. Oh Got ! mechtiger got, helf mir, helf mir, helf mir.

* The cause of the father is the cause of God. It is one who has been robbed and cheated who cries out. Tie his hands that he may not kill and his tongue that he may not curse. Lord God of hosts, help me, help me, help me !

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

SCENE.—*On the leads of a house in Hampstead. Some years have elapsed since Act III.*

The right wall is the wall of the house and in the centre of it are French windows to which steps ascend. The back and left walls are of trelliswork covered with creeper, now yellow and wine red, as it is late September. In the centre of the leads stands a booth, such as is erected by Jews in England during the Feast of Tabernacles. The booth is little more than a canopy, erected on four rustic posts, sufficiently large to cover a dinner party of four. The roof is lightly constructed of branches of trees, plants, fruits flowers and leaves in such a manner as not to be quite impenetrable to wind and rain or starlight. Beneath it is a small table and three white wickerwork chairs. There are flower boxes about containing evergreens and such flowers as are in bloom in England late in September.

It is 4 p.m. on a bright, clear day, the blue sky showing above the trelliswork surmounting the back and left walls.

(On the rising of the curtain a pert MAIDSERVANT enters through French windows carrying a tray of tea, things. She goes to the table under the booth and prepares it for a meal. The sound of a violin being played in accompaniment with a piano comes through the French windows in the wall R. The violin is being played very beautifully. It is the same air

(that MRS. SUFAN played towards the opening of Act I and MISS APPLEYARD played in Act III, viz. Rubinstein's Romance in E flat. When the MAIDSERVANT has finished laying the table she picks up some watercress from the table, puts it in her mouth, and, chewing it, goes towards the French windows.)

MAID. Tea's ready. . . . Tea—is—ready ! (The music stops. Exit MAID, through upper window.)

(LUKE SUFAN appears in the lower French windows, carrying a violin and bow in his hands. His hair and beard are going prematurely white, which gives him a patriarchal appearance. His walk is not so erect as it was and his big figure seems to have shrunk. He wears an old dark flannel suit and roomy slippers. Round his collar is an old scarf tied in a very ragged and slovenly bow in front.)

SUFAN (as he descends the steps). Worse than ever, worse than ever, Adolf. You were never better than the pianola and now you're worse. (He places violin and bow on the tea table.)

(ADOLF appearing at the French windows.).

ADOLF. Then why don't you use the pianola ?

(ADOLF'S hair has left him for ever. His head is like a white billiard ball and not much larger. He keeps fairly straight, but he has certainly shrivelled. His smile has become yellow and he is, therefore, more sinister of aspect than ever. He wears an alpaca jacket and an old black dress tie that once belonged to his master. Resting on his nose are spectacles with steel rims that have gone black.)

SUFAN. You must earn your wages, Adolf.

ADOLF (snappily). I've never done that, eh ?

SUFAN. Shut up !

(They are now both standing by chairs under the booth.)

"Blessed art Thou who hast sanctified us by Thy

commandments and hast commanded us to dwell in the booth."

(They sit down and ADOLF pours out tea for both.)

Remember that the Feast of Tabernacles is one of rejoicing, Adolf. And be amiable!

ADOLF. I can't be amiable. You're always baiting me.

SUFAN. Sour old devil! Have you washed the dog?

ADOLF (*snappily*). Yes.

SUFAN. Posted my letters?

ADOLF. Yes.

SUFAN. Fed the canary?

ADOLF. Yes. It's got enough for a blasted eagle.

SUFAN. Found the tortoise?

ADOLF. No—and I hope I never shall.

SUFAN. You never liked that tortoise.

ADOLF. He was too old and silly. Once I nearly broke my neck over him.

SUFAN. Pity you didn't. You're too old to live. Pass the watercress.

ADOLF (*pushing it over*). That hussy's been stealing it again.

SUFAN. Where would you like to be buried?

ADOLF (*crackling*). Ha! ha! You always would have your joke.

SUFAN. Joke? Have you ordered that new music of Debussy's?

ADOLF (*furiously*). Yes. And I've scrubbed the floors, cleaned the windows, cooked the food, made the beds, swept the chimneys and cleared out the drains. What more do you want?

SUFAN. Lazy devil! And all of it done badly. As badly as you play the piano.

ADOLF. I'm too old for music.

SUFAN. Too old for music! One can't be too old. Nor can one be too young.

ADOLF. Didn't we have enough of that when we were young men?

SUFAN. It was all the world to us then.

ADOLF. Because we knew no better. We soon found out a better game, didn't we, Luke?

SUFAN. We thought it was a better game. And so did Pym and Woods and all that gang.

ADOLF. It was a better game. Weren't you happy then? Are you happy now?

SUFAN. You're right. I was happy then.

ADOLF. And now you are wretched. Why? Because you sit and mope and do nothing. Why did you give up work? You refuse a knighthood and play the fool with your business, and then for years you idle.

SUFAN. Why should I work? You know the fortune I got for the business.

ADOLF (*rubbing his hands*). Yes, and now the company has gone smash. What a bit of luck!

SUFAN. It was bound to go smash—bound to be found out like the other stuff.

ADOLF. Well, well, one down, t'other come up. You could do it again. That's what Mr. Woods and Mr. Pym are always saying.

SUFAN. I suppose I could. In fact I know I could.

ADOLF. Then why don't you. Here's your chance with this cigarette Mr. Pym has got hold of. Go back, Luke, go back and be happy again.

SUFAN. I could go back, but should I be happy?

ADOLF. Happy—happy working up a good business! Luke, what's come over you?

SUFAN. Perhaps it's because I know it's a dirty business.

ADOLF (*horrified*). A dirty business! Business—business dirty! How can it be dirty if it pays good money?

SUFAN (*smiling*). What is it that the end doesn't justify, Adolf?

ADOLF. See here, Luke. God made the man?

Yes. God made the grain? (*He picks up the loaf of bread.*) Yes. Then God made the weights and measures. Go and use them.

SUFAN (*smiling*). This cigarette belongs to Pym and Woods, doesn't it?

ADOLF. Yes, Luke. You can have a third share. But they want your name and the money to advertise it.

SUFAN. I thought that would be part of the bargain. Money to advertise it! Am I to start all that traffic over again?

ADOLF. Never mind what you think about it. It's work—it's business. It'll fill your mind—keep you alive. What business has a man in his prime pottering about a garden and scraping a fiddle?

SUFAN. What's the special virtue of this precious fag?

ADOLF. They'll tell you to-day. I expect them at any minute. You go back, Luke, and show them. They sneered in the city when you went out. Go back and go to the top again. Make another fortune. You could make 'em gasp if you like.

SUFAN. It's tempting. It's very tempting. I know that hard work would ease some of my memories. To leave the music and go back to—business! Can I do it? The older you get, Adolf, the more music you should want. I seem to want the things I loved in my youth more and more every day. I like to think every one does. If she would, Adolf, if only she would.

ADOLF. Don't talk of her! She has brought curses enough upon you.

SUFAN. For what I've suffered I have only myself to blame.

ADOLF. No need to tell me that. You forgot the promises of Isaiah and the injunctions of Ezra. You married a Gentile. No good can come of a sinful marriage.

SUFAN. She is the wife of my covenant. I sup-

pose I have sinned, but I have paid. God should give her back to me.

ADOLF (*angrily*). You blaspheme! She may come, but God can never give her back.

SUFÁN. What a narrow, fanatical old fool you are, Adolf.

ADOLF. Ah! You are the English Jew all over. Just so much of the religion as suits you. I know you.

SUFAN. Then if you know me don't irritate me. I never thought she had it in her nature to be cruel. She left me—yes—but that was because she was so sensitive of the wrong she had done me. It doesn't seem natural.

ADOLF. Women are like boiled eggs—either hard or soft. She's a hard one.

SUFAN. I haven't asked much. Only that we should come together for the last few years. I wanted her, Adolf, even before I asked. She ought to listen now, now when we're both soon to be children again. I don't understand her never answering. That's not like her. Six letters and all of them registered. You did register them, Adolf, didn't you?

ADOLF. Certainly, Luke.

SUFAN. To the Qualtroughs' house, eh?

ADOLF. Yes, Luke.

SUFAN. To ignore them altogether! It's so unfeeling, Adolf, and she was never that.

ADOLF. I don't know. You never get to the inside of a woman's heart. That's why I never married. They make you think they're tender, but I believe they're all tough, really. Tough—tough as leather.

SUFAN. Quarrels mustn't—mustn't last.

ADOLF (*sneering*). Quarrels!

SUFAN. Aye. Call it that. Why shouldn't I call it that?

ADOLF. Woman disgraced herself. Disgraced you. Fooled you. Ruined you. You weren't good enough for her. Too vulgar. Have you forgotten?

Quarrels ! (*He makes an exclamation of disgust.*)

SUFAN. Yes. I have forgotten. She has not. There's a verse in the Bible, Adolf, about this. What is it ? Ah, but she didn't like me to quote the Bible. I remember that. I did pour it on her a bit Christians are different about the Bible, Adolf. They like to feel it. They don't like anyone to be glib with it. I'm old enough to understand that. . . . How different we were !

ADOLF. Well, you know her now. You know what her heart's like. You make me sick the way you keep whining. Where's the man that was in you, Luke ?

SUFAN. I'm all alone.

ADOLF. Haven't I stood by you ?

SUFAN. You !

ADOLF. Yes—a friend !

SUFAN. A friend !

ADOLF. Well, a servant—a servant, a faithful servant.

SUFAN. A friend ! A servant ! You're neither. You're a habit.

ADOLF (*in a bullying tone*). Never mind. I'm all you've got left. And what's my reward ? Eternal whining about the woman who wrecked you. Don't talk about her any more. Do you hear ? I won't hear about her. I hate her. I hate her. She's a goy and she has brought a curse upon us.

(*The MAIDSERVANT shows in WILLOUGHBY Woods and BERT PYM. The passing of the years has left its mark on these two men.*)

MAIDSERVANT (*contemptuously, reading from cards*). Mr. W. Woods and Mr. B. Pym !

(*She goes to the table under the booth and clears up the tea-things, first taking another pinch of watercress, which she chews.*)

PYM. Well, my boy ! (*Slapping SUFAN on the*

back.) Wonderful weather for the time of year, what? Here we are once more—under the shade of the sheltering palm. (*He begins to warble.*) "Oh, my Dolores, queen of the eastern seas."

WOODS. How are you keeping, Sufan?

(*SUFAN shakes hands with both of them.*)

Guess this is the first time I've seen a pergola on a roof.
(*Indicating booth.*)

ADOLF (*gravely*). This is the Feast of Tabernacles, Mr. Woods.

WOODS. Feast of Tabernacles?

SUFAN. Yes. Every Jew who has space for it must during the seven days of the festival eat his meals and receive his friends in a booth, if he does not altogether live in it. It is commanded in the Mosaic Law.

WOODS. I see. I see. That's why we're shown out on the tiles, eh?

PYM. I suppose it commemorates something.

SUFAN. It commemorates the way in which the Israelites lived in booths during the journey through the wilderness.

WOODS. Yes, yes. Very interesting.

(*Exit MAID with tray of tea-things.*)

PYM. You seem to have mugged the Bible up all right in your time, Sufie.

SUFAN. Well, bonnies, sit down. What can I do for you?

PYM. It's your money we want. (*He strikes the attitude of the poster.*)

SUFAN. Cigarettes, Adolf says.

WOODS. Yes, Sufan, and it's some notion. (*He produces a tin box and places it on the table.*)

SUFAN. What's the quality?

PYM. Listen, Sufan. We've done it. I bought the recipe off a drunken doctor for twenty-five quid and it's worth a million. Ever had Wind under the

heart? Nor have I. But this cures it. Ever had appendicitis? Nor have I. This prevents you from getting it. Ever had fullness after meals? Well, this cigarette gives that the knock.

SUFAN. What are you talking about? A medicinal cigarette?

WOODS. Precisely. And do you know what we want to call it? Why, "Sufan's Staminal Cigarette."

SUFAN (*stroking his beard and not a little amused*). I see. I see. That's where I come in.

WOODS. Just so—your name, and, of course, some capital. But it's a cinch.

PYM. Listen to me, Sufie. Is your indigestion obstinate? Smoke Sufan's Staminal Cigarettes. Why take Salts? Smoke a Double S Cigarette before breakfast. Salts taste nasty. People would much rather smoke. And then look at the woman whose parents or husbands won't let 'em smoke. All they've got to do is to get Liver and Kidney trouble and get the doctor to order 'em these.

WOODS. And this drunken quack we got it off says they're just dandy for rheumatism and gout.

SUFAN (*amused*). Not much they don't cure, is there, bonny? Well, let's try them. Opium, I suppose.

(*Each one except ADOLF takes a cigarette and lights it.*)

PYM (*rather uneasily*). Of course, you've got to get accustomed to them.

SUFAN (*after one big draw which he puffs through his nostrils*). My God! (*He stamps the cigarette out.*)

WOODS. Perhaps you've got a specially bad one. Try another.

SUFAN. Not for a kingdom. Phew, what an odour!

PYM. Well, my boy, they've got to be nasty. People don't think medicine's any good if it tastes nice.

SUFAN. What's in 'em? Garlic?

ADOLF. May I try one?

SUFAN. Certainly, Adolf. If they don't kill you, they won't kill anybody

(ADOLF takes a cigarette, lights it carefully and smokes thoughtfully. They all watch him.)

WOODS. Well, Adolf?

ADOLF. They are soothing, very soothing.

PYM (slapping his knee). There you are. Adolf shall give us the first testimonial. "Old man of seventy feels like seventeen." Tell you what? Old Adolf shall get married. That would be a stunt, Woodsey.

WOODS. Sure!

PYM. The Staminal Cigarette Wedding. Septuagenarian renews his youth.

SUFAN (laughing). Oh, tell 'em it cures a broken neck. They'll believe you. Why die at all? Collapse of the death rate. Consternation of the undertaking trade. The old, old game!

PYM. Yes, Sufie, and how easy. Just a good advertising campaign—

(ADOLF commences to cough violently. The other three roar with laughter. ADOLF looks around very nervously and then makes a doleful exit through the French windows, still coughing.)

(In the midst of their laughter enters the MAIDSERVANT through the French windows.)

MAIDSERVANT. A Mr. Qualtrough has called to see you, sir.

(There is silence)

SUFAN (astonished). Mr. Qualtrough—?

MAIDSERVANT (resignedly). Mr. Ker-waltrough. (She puts her hand on her left hip.)

WOODS. We met the chap of that name years ago at your house.

PYM. That's right. He's a well-known novelist now.

SUFAN. Qualtrough! Why should he come? (*To the MAIDSERVANT.*) Yes, yes, I'll see him. Ask him to wait a few moments, will you?

(*Exit MAIDSERVANT.*)

WOODS. Say the word if we're in the way, Sufan.

SUFAN. Well, bonnies, I shouldn't have kept you so long, because—I'm not on.

WOODS. You're not on!

PYM. Why, there's a fortune in it properly advertised, isn't there?

SUFAN. There may be, but I'm not on. I've done with that game, bonnies, done with advertisement and all its uses and abuses. Sorry to disappoint you, but I'm not going back.

PYM. Not going back! You won't have to work. All you've got to do is to lie in a hammock and advertise.

SUFAN. Yes, yes, advertise! Advertise! No need to tell me how to do it. I made my money that way, but it's not a particularly wholesome way, bonnies, is it? I knew it when I was in it and didn't dare think of it. Now I do think of it and I'm not going back.

WOODS. Not wholesome. What do you mean, Sufan? It's a fair trade.

SUFAN. It's a foul trade. We all three know it, bonnies. And cigarettes, too! As if that market was not sufficiently poisonous already. You'll find the beastly "ad." in any paper. Ten for twopence or threepence. Smoke 'em and let your kids smoke 'em. Kill yourself and kill your kids. Ye gods, is there anything in the world so unscrupulous as the commercial side of a newspaper!

PYM. You're a nice one to talk. You took plenty of advantage of the press in your day.

SUFAN. I did. I did. And you lured me on.

I was a swindler. I made my money by swindling, thanks to your encouragement. But we're not the greatest sinners, bonnies. It's the press which creates advertisers, which is principally to blame. "Advertise," "advertise," they scream at you without the slightest regard for the morality of the advertiser's trade. They don't care a brass farthing what a man sells so long as he buys space.

WOODS. That's a lie. There's not a decent newspaper in London that would take a crook "ad." And not an agent of standing that would handle such business.

SUFAN. Is there a paper in London that refused "ads." of my two swindles? Is there a paper in London that would refuse "ads." of this? (*He taps the cigarette box.*) Oh, I know the press will sometimes keep out a bookmaker or the little quacks that can't spend much. I know there are exceptions, bonny. But the big quacks can advertise as they like. People used to say that the war would weed out the charlatans and confidence gentry. But they guessed too soon. The war couldn't stop advertisers bossing editors.

PYM (*impudently*). Bow-wow!

SUFAN. And you are the men who cultivate the whole rotten business, instigate it, develop it.

PYM (*mockingly*). Once I was a fireman and now I am saved.

SUFAN. The more it flourishes the better for you. You've spotted some fresh swag. You want to start me off again with a new skeleton key. I won't go.

(PYM commences to whistle airily.)

I don't blame you, mind. You're in it and you can't get out of it. I *was* in it, and I'm out of it. By Heaven, I don't go back.

WOODS. No need to get fresh. Cut the talk out. Say yes or no to me. I'm a business man.

SUFAN. I've said no. Good-bye, bonnies. I

bear you no ill will. But I simply have no use now for anything you're interested in. (*He turns to his violin.*) There are things worth more to me than all the get-rich-quick dodges in the world. (*He points upwards.*) It's the Feast of the Ingathering. The produce has been gathered in and the people rejoice before the Lord for the blessings which He has granted to them.

WOODS (*muttering*). Absolutely "nobody home," Bert. Reckon we'd better get out of this asylum right away. (*He moves towards the French windows.*)

PYM (*following him*). I'm with you.

SUFAN (*offering him his hand*). We can shake before we split, bonnies. And don't forget your cigarettes. (*He hands them the box.*) You may be right about the fortune in them. I hope you make it, but (*chuckling*) between you and me and the old fiddle there, a cigarette that tastes like that will take some selling.

(QUALTROUGH appears at the French windows. *He is greyer and heavier, having quite a paternal aspect.*)

Qualtrough! Why, bonny, good old bonny. You know Woods and Pym, don't you?

QUALTROUGH. Oh yes. Good afternoon.

WOODS. Good afternoon.

(*With a surly nod Woods exits R.*)

PYM (*snappishly*). Good afternoon!

(*He follows Woods off.*)

SUFAN. It's great to see you again. (*He puts his hands on Qualtrough's shoulders*). And you're not any younger, by Jove. I hardly knew you. How's your wife? I heard about the kiddie. It was in *The Times*, wasn't it? Lucky beggar. And the books are going very well, I see. I suppose you're a rich man, bonny. Motor cars, eh? And a villa on the Riviera. What it is to be young. I'm young

when I sit still. I'm only old when I'm walking about. Well, I'm really glad to see you. Any news? Won't you sit down?

QUALTROUGH. Sufan, I come with a message from your wife.

SUFAN. A message from Ellen.

QUALTROUGH (*sternly*). Yes.

SUFAN (*deeply moved*). Oh, bonny, at last, at last! Has she been ill? Why didn't she write? Why—

QUALTROUGH. Why haven't you answered her letters?

SUFAN. Her letters! Her letters, bonny! I have had none.

QUALTROUGH. You have had none!

SUFAN. No, bonny, no. No letters. You don't really mean that she has written?

QUALTROUGH. Several times. You consistently failed to answer, so I called on her behalf this morning. You were out, but I saw Adolf.

SUFAN (*puzzled*). He said nothing to me about it.

QUALTROUGH. He said that you had the letters and burnt them.

SUFAN. What! Burnt them! Why should he say that? I—burn her letters! Adolf didn't say that. There were no letters.

(ADOLF enters from R. *He is staggered at the sight of Qualtrough.*)

Adolf, we have had no letters, have we, no letters from Mrs. Sufan?

ADOLF. He was here this morning. I forgot to tell you.

SUFAN. You forgot! But we were talking—only just now. And you told Mr. Qualtrough that I burnt her letters. (*He puts his hands to his head.*) What does it all mean, Adolf?

ADOLF. He's lying. There were no letters.

QUALTROUGH. You scoundrel! This morning you said—

SUFAN (*interrupting*). Bonny, has she had no letters from me?

QUALTROUGH. Not one! That man has been tricking you. I gave him a letter from her this morning. Have you had it?

ADOLF. Oh, Luke, Luke, I swear—

SUFAN. You gave him a letter from her! Adolf, give it to me!

(ADOLF shrinks from him.)

Give me the letter. (*Towers over ADOLF in an awful fury.*)

ADOLF. Yes, yes—it—it got torn. It—it escaped my memory—I— (*He produces the letter and gives it to SUFAN.*)

SUFAN. It has been opened!

QUALTROUGH. Opened!

SUFAN. You devil!

(*He flings himself upon ADOLF, who screams like a shot hare. For a moment the two men struggle together.*)

QUALTROUGH. For God's sake, not that!

(*He drags SUFAN'S fingers away from ADOLF'S throat and forces the big man into the chair L. of table.*)

Now (*to ADOLF*) get away before you're killed.

(ADOLF, *gasping, slinks off R.*)

SUFAN (*trying to regain his breath*). Oh, bonny, bonny, bonny! I trusted him. I trusted him. I was mad. Of course he hated her. But I never thought he would have done this. The beast! The crazy, fanatical beast!

QUALTROUGH. Be quiet for a bit and rest yourself.

SUFAN. Yes, bonny, I'm too old for that game. At your age I'd have killed him.

QUALTROUGH. Read the letter.

(SUFAN does so. *He is deeply moved. He rests his head in his hands.*)

Let me get you some brandy?

SUFAN. No, no, bonny. Let me be. I'll be all right. It was the exertion. Breath, you know, breath. Wait till you're my age. The old Staminal couldn't cure that. . . . She'll come to me, bonny. She'll come to me. Oh, God be thanked. Bonny, perhaps, perhaps I should go to her.

QUALTROUGH. She would prefer to come to you. Tell me, how long is it since you asked her to come back?

SUFAN. How long? I have written often, bonny—I don't know how many times.

QUALTROUGH. And that devil evidently destroyed every letter. By Jove, you must have suffered as much as she.

SUFAN. Suffered? Yes. But I don't want any pity. I'm a Jew, bonny. I married a Christian woman. That was a mistake. It was too big a gamble. Both our lives were wrecked. I'm old now. One mustn't look back on the mistakes. When the stream nears the sea its early courses don't matter. I want to be by her side for the rest of my few days. She has forgiven me and you will tell her that I forgave her long ago. Once I thought I would never forgive. But being lonely—and seeing death in the distance, as you do when you're lonely—makes a big difference. And I'm old, bonny. I'll soon be getting near that second childhood. Isn't it natural that I should want what I wanted in my first childhood? I wanted this when I was a child (*he fingers the violin on the table*) I want it—need it now. I wanted her when I was a child. I need her now. Tell her it all didn't happen. That's it. Nothing of it happened. She will like this little house.

QUALTROUGH. Good-bye, Sufan. She will come to you.

SUFAN. Soon?

QUALTROUGH. Soon, old friend, very soon. (*He goes up steps to French windows.*)

SUFAN (*rising*). That's right. Ask her to come to me here. It's the autumn, bonny. Tell her that we must prepare for the winter. Tell her that the trees have the last colour of all. My hair has the last colour of all. See it. (*He chuckles rather pathetically.*) Sufan's Scalp Cream no good for that, bonny. But you know what to tell her, you know.

(*QUALTROUGH goes quietly off R. through the French windows.*)

(*ADOLF bursts in upon him from R. and kneels to him.*)

ADOLF. Oh, Luke, Luke, forgive me. Forgive me! Forty years I've served you. (*He is almost gibbering with hysteria.*) Forty years!

SUFAN (*in reverie*). "Your wife, Ellen."

ADOLF. You can't turn me out, Luke. I've been a good servant. I helped you in the beginning. I haven't any money saved, not a penny, Luke. Not a penny. I'll starve. I'll starve. You can't drive me into the streets after forty years. I'm too old, Luke. Have mercy on me, have mercy on me. I'm poor and old, Luke, poor and old.

SUFAN (*who has been smiling over his letter*). Get away! Get away!

ADOLF. Luke, Luke, but—

SUFAN (*rising and shouting angrily*). Get away! No, stop. (*He picks up his violin and strokes it. Then he takes the bow.*) Go and play the piano.

ADOLF. The piano, sir!

SUFAN. Yes, you devil! You can't live much longer. That's one consolation. Go and play the piano. The Rubinstein Romance. Get along with you.

ADOLF (*slinking away towards the French windows*).

Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. I'll—yes, sir. Oh thank you, sir. Yes, sir. Of course, sir, yes, sir.

(Exit ADOLF.)

(SUFAN sits. He plucks at his strings, smiling happily. The piano music is heard, played falteringly. SUFAN begins to play. Now at the French windows MRS. SUFAN appears. She looks gray and old and fragile. She comes towards her husband and watches him as he plays. SUFAN looks up and stops playing.)

SUFAN (rising). Ellen !

(The piano music goes on.)

MRS. SUFAN (wonderingly in a frail voice). Luke, is it really you ?

SUFAN. How old you look ! How old you look !

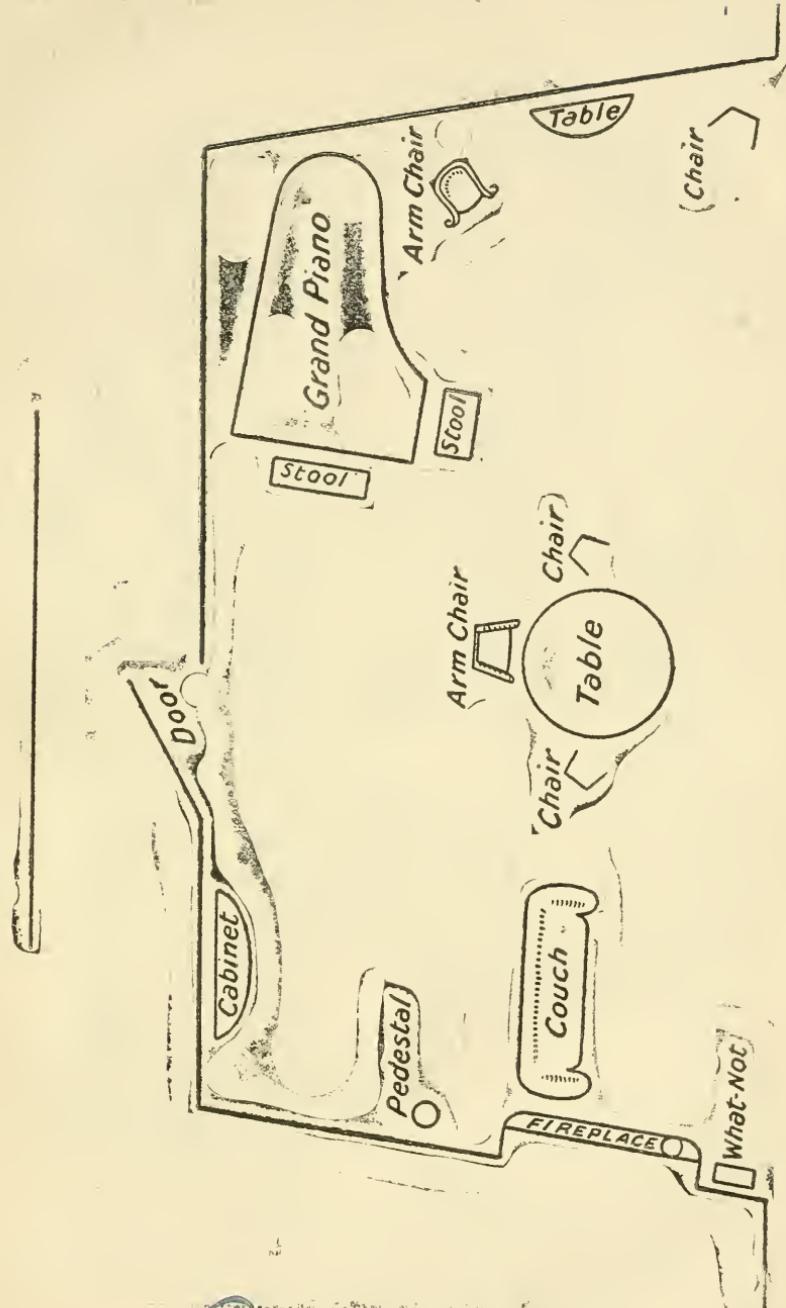
MRS. SUFAN. And you, Luke. How untidy you've become.

(SUFAN looks down on his disordered dress and smiles shamefacedly.)

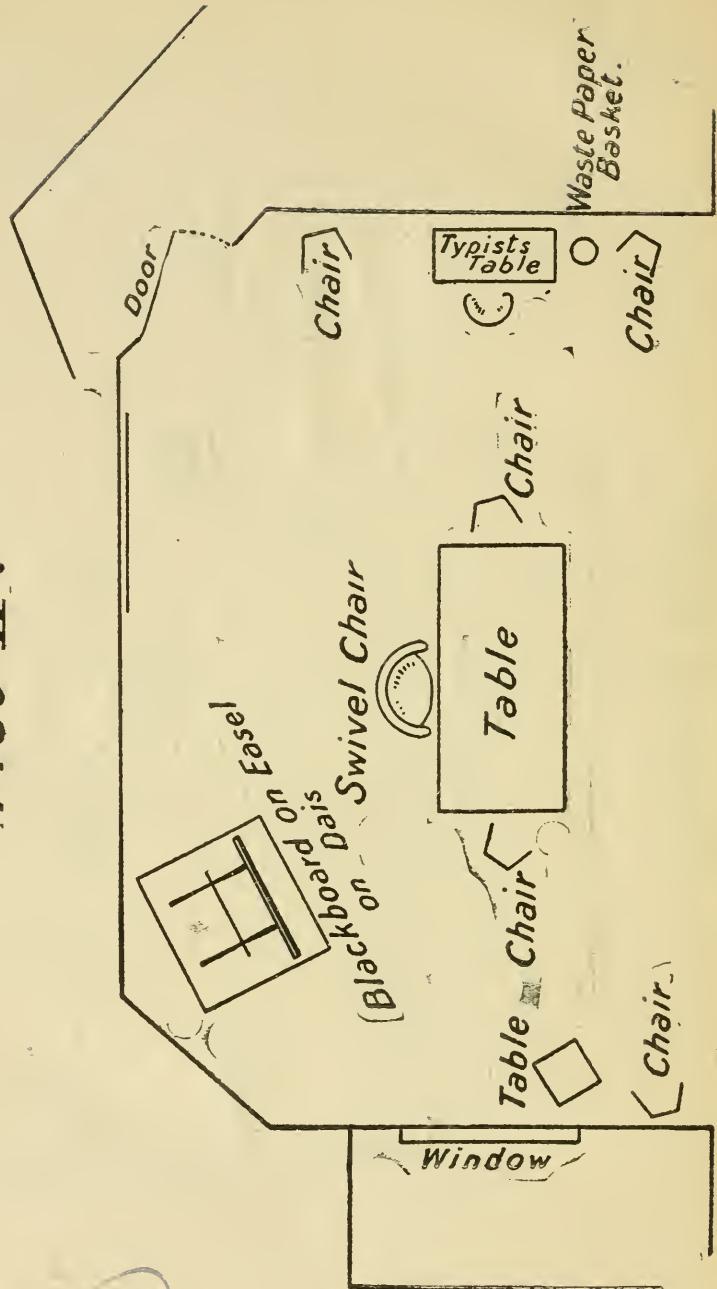
SUFAN. Have I, Ellen ? (She goes to him and ties his necktie in a bow.)

CURTAIN.

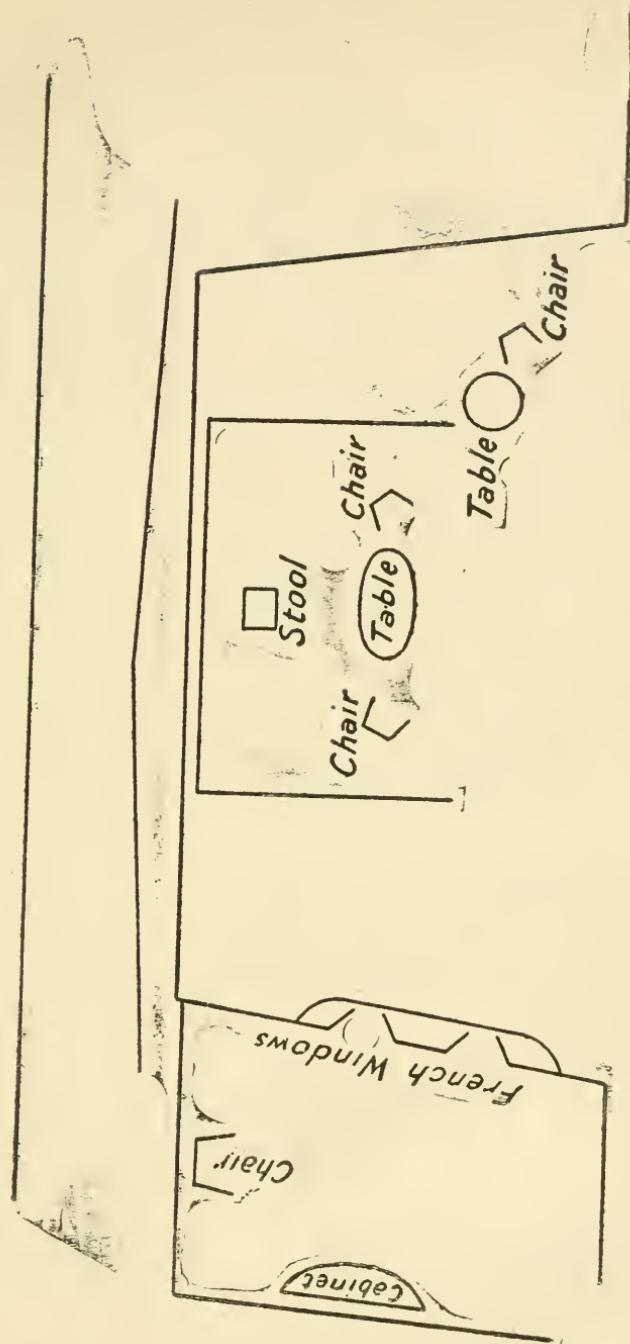
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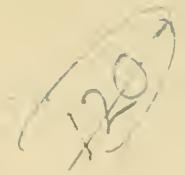
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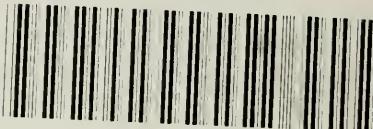
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